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GEORGE WASHINGTON, AT THE AGE OF FORTY.

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PART TWO

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PART TWO

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From amid surrounding perplexities, Washington still turned a hopeful eye to Canada. He expected daily to receive tidings that Montgomery and Arnold were within the walls of Quebec, and he had even written to the former to forward as much as could be spared of the large quantities of arms, blankets, clothing, and other military stores, said to be deposited there; the army before Boston being in great need of such supplies.

On the 18th of January came dispatches to him from General Schuyler, containing withering tidings. The following is the purport. Montgomery, on the 2d of December, the day after his arrival at Point aux Trembles, set off in face of a driving snow storm for Quebec, and arrived before it on the 5th. The works, from their great extent, appeared to him incapable of being defended by the actual garrison; made up, as he said, of "Maclean's banditti," the sailors

battery, a shot from the fortress dismounted one of the guns and disabled many of the men. A second shot immediately following was almost as destructive. "This is warm work, sir," said Montgomery to Captain Lamb. "It is indeed and certainly no place for you, sir." "Why so, captain?" "Because there are enough of us here to be killed, without the loss of you, which would be irreparable."

The general saw the insufficiency of the battery, and, on retiring, gave Captain Lamb permission to leave it whenever he thought proper. The veteran waited until after dark, when, securing all the guns, he abandoned the ruined redoubt. The general in this visit was attended by Aaron Burr, whom he had appointed his aid-de-camp. Lamb wondered that he should encumber himself with such a boy. The perfect coolness and self-possession with which the youth mingled in this dangerous scene, and the fire which sparkled in his eye, soon convinced Lamb, according to his own account, that "the young volunteer was no ordinary man." *

Nearly three weeks had been consumed in these futile operations. The army, ill-clothed and ill-provided, was becoming impatient of the rigors of a Canadian winter; the term for which part of the troops had enlisted would expire with the year and they already talked of returning home. Montgomery was sadly conscious of the insufficiency of his means; still he could not endure the thoughts of retiring from before the place without striking a blow. He knew that much was expected from him, in consequence of his late achievements, and that the eyes of the public were fixed upon this Canadian enterprise. He determined, therefore, to attempt to carry the place by *escalade*. One-third of his

* Life of John Lamb, p. 125.

men were to set fire to the houses and stockades of the suburb of St. Roque, and force the barriers of the lower town; while the main body should scale the bastion of Cape Diamond.

It was a hazardous, almost a desperate project, yet it has met with the approbation of military men. He calculated upon the devotion and daring spirit of his men, upon the discontent which prevailed among the Canadians, and upon the incompetency of the garrison for the defense of such extensive works.

In regard to the devotion of his men, he was threatened with disappointment. When the plan of assault was submitted to a council of war, three of the captains in Arnold's division, the terms of whose companies were near expiring, declined to serve, unless they and their men could be transferred to another command. This almost mutinous movement, it is supposed, was fomented by Arnold's old adversary, Major Brown, and it was with infinite difficulty Montgomery succeeded in overcoming it.

The ladders were now provided for the *escalade*, and Montgomery waited with impatience for a favorable night to put it into execution. Smallpox and desertion had reduced his little army to seven hundred and fifty men. From certain movements of the enemy, it was surmised that the deserters had revealed his plan. He changed, therefore, the arrangement. Colonel Livingston was to make a false attack on the gate of St. John's, and set fire to it; Major Brown, with another detachment, was to menace the bastion of Cape Diamond. Arnold, with three hundred and fifty of the hardy fellows who had followed him through the wilderness, strengthened by Captain Lamb and forty of his company, was to assault the suburbs and batteries of St.

from the frigates and other vessels, together with the citizens obliged to take up arms; most of whom were impatient of the fatigues of a siege and wished to see matters accommodated amicably. "I propose," added he, "amusing Mr. Carleton, with a formal attack, erecting batteries, etc., but mean to assault the works, I believe toward the lower town, which is the weakest part."

According to his own account, his whole force did not exceed nine hundred effective men, three hundred of whom he had brought with him; the rest he found with Colonel Arnold. The latter he pronounced an exceeding fine corps, inured to fatigue, and well accustomed to a cannon shot, having served at Cambridge. "There is a style of discipline among them," adds he, "much superior to what I have been used to see in this campaign. He, himself (Arnold), is active, intelligent, and enterprising. Fortune often baffles the sanguine expectations of poor mortals. I am not intoxicated with her favors, but I do think there is a fair prospect of success." *

On the day of his arrival, he sent a flag with a summons to surrender. It was fired upon, and obliged to retire. Exasperated at this outrage, which, it is thought, was committed by the veteran Maclean, Montgomery wrote an indignant, reproachful, and even menacing letter to Carleton, reiterating the demand, magnifying the number of his troops, and warning him against the consequences of an assault. Finding it was rejected from the walls, it was conveyed in by a woman, together with letters addressed to the principal merchants, promising great indulgence in case of immediate submission. By Carleton's orders, the messenger was sent to prison for a few days, and then drummed out of town.

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* Montgomery to Schuyler, Dec. 5.

Montgomery now prepared for an attack. The ground was frozen to a great depth, and covered with snow; he was scantily provided with intrenching tools, and had only a field train of artillery, and a few mortars. By dint of excessive labor a breastwork was thrown up, four hundred yards distant from the walls, and opposite to the gate of St. Louis, which is nearly in the center. It was formed of gabions, ranged side by side, and filled with snow, over which water was thrown until thoroughly frozen. Here Captain Lamb mounted five light pieces and a howitzer. Several mortars were placed in the suburbs of St. Roque, which extends on the left of the promontory, below the heights, and nearly on a level with the river.

From the "Ice Battery," Captain Lamb opened a well-sustained and well-directed fire upon the walls, but his field-pieces were too light to be effective. With his howitzer he threw shells into the town and set it on fire in several places. For five days and nights the garrison was kept on the alert by the teasing fire of this battery. The object of Montgomery was to harass the town, and increase the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants. His flag of truce being still fired upon, he caused the Indians in his camp to shoot arrows into the town, having letters attached to them, addressed to the inhabitants, representing Carleton's refusal to treat, and advising them to rise in a body and compel him. It was all in vain; whatever might have been the disposition of the inhabitants, they were completely under the control of the military. On the evening of the fifth day, Montgomery paid a visit to the ice battery. The heavy artillery from the wall had repaid its ineffectual fire with ample usury. The brittle ramparts had been shivered like glass; several of the guns had been rendered useless. Just as they arrived at the

battery, a shot from the fortress dismounted one of the guns and disabled many of the men. A second shot immediately following was almost as destructive. "This is warm work, sir," said Montgomery to Captain Lamb. "It is indeed and certainly no place for you, sir." "Why so, captain?" "Because there are enough of us here to be killed, without the loss of you, which would be irreparable."

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Roque; while Montgomery, with the residue of his forces, was to pass below the bastion at Cape Diamond, defile along the river, carry the defenses at Drummond's Wharf, and thus enter the lower town on one side, while Arnold forced his way into it on the other. These movements were all to be made at the same time, on the discharge of signal rockets; thus distracting the enemy, and calling their attention to four several points.

On the 31st of December, at two o'clock in the morning, the troops repaired to their several destinations, under cover of a violent snowstorm. By some accident or mistake, such as is apt to occur in complicated plans of attack, the signal rockets were let off before the lower divisions had time to get to their fighting ground. They were descried by one of Maclean's Highland officers, who gave the alarm. Livingston, also, failed to make the false attack on the gate of St. John's, which was to have caused a diversion favorable to Arnold's attack on the suburb below.

The feint by Major Brown, on the bastion of Cape Diamond, was successful, and concealed the march of General Montgomery. That gallant commander descended from the heights to Wolfe's Cove, and led his division along the shore of the St. Lawrence, round the beetling promontory of Cape Diamond. The narrow approach to the lower town in that direction was traversed by a picket or stockade, defended by Canadian militia; beyond which was a second defense, a kind of block-house, forming a battery of small pieces, manned by Canadian militia, and a few seamen, and commanded by the captain of a transport. The aim of Montgomery was to come upon these barriers by surprise. The pass which they defended is formidable at all times, having a swift river on one side and overhanging precipices on the

other; but at this time was rendered peculiarly difficult by drifting snow, and by great masses of ice piled on each other at the foot of the cliffs.

The troops made their way painfully, in extended and straggling files, along the narrow footway, and over the slippery piles of ice. Among the foremost were some of the first New York regiment, led on by Captain Chesseman. Montgomery, who was familiar with them, urged them on. "Forward, men of New York!" cried he. "You are not the men to flinch when your general leads you on!"

In his eagerness, he threw himself far in the advance, with his pioneers and a few officers, and made a dash at the first barrier. The Canadians stationed there, taken by surprise, made a few random shots, then threw down their muskets and fled. Montgomery sprang forward, aided with his own hand to pluck down the pickets, which the pioneers were sawing, and having made a breach sufficiently wide to admit three or four men abreast, entered sword in hand, followed by his staff, Captain Cheeseman, and some of his men. The Canadians had fled from the picket to the battery or block-house, but seemed to have carried the panic with them, for the battery remained silent. Montgomery felt for a moment as if the surprise had been complete. He paused in the breach to rally on the troops, who were stumbling along the difficult pass. "Push on, my brave boys," cried he, "Quebec is ours!"

He again dashed forward, but, when within forty paces of the battery, a discharge of grapeshot from a single cannon made deadly havoc. Montgomery and McPherson, one of his aides, were killed on the spot. Captain Cheeseman, who was leading on his New Yorkers, received a canister shot through the body; made an effort to rise and push forward,

but fell back a corpse; with him fell his orderly sergeant and several of his men.

This fearful slaughter, and the death of their general, threw everything in confusion. The officer next in lineal rank to the general was far in the rear; in this emergency, Colonel Campbell, quartermaster-general, took the command, but, instead of rallying the men, and endeavoring to effect the junction with Arnold, ordered a retreat, and abandoned the half-won field, leaving behind him the bodies of the slain.

While all this was occurring on the side of Cape Diamond, Arnold led his division against the opposite side of the lower town, along the suburb and street of St. Roque. Like Montgomery, he took the advance at the head of a forlorn hope of twenty-five men, accompanied by his secretary Oswald, formerly one of his captains at Ticonderoga. Captain Lamb and his artillery company came next, with a field-piece mounted on a sledge. Then came a company with ladders and scaling implements, followed by Morgan and his riflemen. In the rear of all these came the main body. A battery on a wharf commanded the narrow pass by which they had to advance. This was to be attacked with the field-piece, and then scaled with ladders by the forlorn hope; while Captain Morgan, with his riflemen, was to pass round the wharf on the ice.

The false attack which was to have been made by Livingston on the gate of St. John's, by way of diversion, had not taken place; there was nothing, therefore, to call off the attention of the enemy in this quarter from the detachment. The troops, as they straggled along in lengthened file through the drifting snow, were sadly galled by a flanking fire on the right, from walls and pickets. The field-piece at length became so deeply embedded in a snowdrift that it could not

be moved. Lamb sent word to Arnold of the impedient; in the meantime, he and his artillery company were brought to a halt. The company with the scaling ladders would have halted also, having been told to keep in the rear of the artillery; but they were urged on by Morgan with a thundering oath, who pushed on after them with his riflemen, the artillery company opening to the right and left to let them pass.

They arrived in the advance just as Arnold was leading on his forlorn hope to attack the barrier. Before he reached it, a severe wound in the right leg with a musket ball completely disabled him, and he had to be borne from the field. Morgan instantly took the command. Just then Lamb came up with his company, armed with muskets and bayonets, having received orders to abandon the field-piece and support the advance. Oswald joined him with the forlorn hope. The battery which commanded the defile mounted two pieces of cannon. There was a discharge of grape-shot when the assailants were close under the muzzles of the guns, yet but one man was killed. Before there could be a second discharge, the battery was carried by assault, some firing into the embrasures; others scaling the walls. The captain and thirty of his men were taken prisoners.

The day was just dawning as Morgan led on to attack the second barrier, and his men had to advance under a fire from the town walls on their right, which incessantly thinned their ranks. The second barrier was reached; they applied their scaling ladders to storm it. The defense was brave and obstinate, but the defenders were at length driven from their guns and the battery was gained. At the last moment one of the gunners ran back, linstock in hand, to give one more shot. Captain Lamb snapped a fusee at him. It missed

fire. The cannon was discharged, and a grape-shot wounded Lamb in the head, carrying away part of the cheek-bone. He was borne off senseless to a neighboring shed.

The two barriers being now taken, the way on this side into the lower town seemed open. Morgan prepared to enter it with the victorious vanguard; first stationing Captain Dearborn and some provincials at Palace Gate, which opened down into the defile from the upper town. By this time, however, the death of Montgomery and retreat of Campbell had enabled the enemy to turn all their attention in this direction. A large detachment sent by General Carleton sallied out of Palace Gate after Morgan had passed it, surprised and captured Dearborn and the guard, and completely cut off the advanced party. The main body, informed of the death of Montgomery, and giving up the game as lost, retreated to the camp, leaving behind the field-piece which Lamb's company had abandoned, and the mortars in the battery of St. Roque.

Morgan and his men were now hemmed in on all sides, and obliged to take refuge in a stone house from the inveterate fire which assailed them. From the windows of this house they kept up a desperate defense, until cannon were brought to bear upon it. Then, hearing of the death of Montgomery, and seeing that there was no prospect of relief, Morgan and his gallant handful of followers were compelled to surrender themselves prisoners of war.

Thus foiled at every point, the wrecks of the little army abandoned their camp and retreated about three miles from the town; where they hastily fortified themselves, apprehending a pursuit by the garrison. General Carleton, however, contented himself with having secured the safety of the place, and remained cautiously passive until he should be

properly re-enforced; distrusting the good faith of the motley inhabitants. He is said to have treated the prisoners with a humanity the more honorable, considering the "habitual military severity of his temper"; their heroic daring, displayed in the assault upon the lower town, having excited his admiration.

The remains of the gallant Montgomery received a soldier's grave, within the fortifications of Quebec, by the care of Cramahe, the lieutenant-governor, who had formerly known him.

Arnold, wounded and disabled, had been assisted back to the camp, dragging one foot after the other for nearly a mile, in great agony, and exposed continually to the musketry from the walls at fifty yards' distance, which shot down several at his side.

He took temporary command of the shattered army, until General Wooster should arrive from Montreal, to whom he sent an express, urging him to bring on succor. "On this occasion," says a contemporary writer, "he discovered the utmost vigor of a determined mind, and a genius full of resources. Defeated and wounded, as he was, he put his troops into such a situation as to keep them still formidable."*

With a mere handful of men, at one time not exceeding five hundred, he maintained a blockade of the strong fortress from which he had just been repulsed. "I have no thoughts," writes he, "of leaving this proud town until I enter it in triumph. *I am in the way of my duty, and I know no fear.*" †

Happy for him had he fallen at this moment. Happy

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* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 112.

† See Arnold's Letter. Remembrancer, ii. 368.

for him had he found a soldier's and a patriot's grave, beneath the rock-built walls of Quebec. Those walls would have remained enduring monuments of his renown. His name, like that of Montgomery, would have been treasured up among the dearest though most mournful recollections of his country, and that country would have been spared the single traitorous blot that dims the bright page of its Revolutionary history.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Correspondence of Washington and Schuyler on the Disasters in Canada—Re-enforcements required from New England—Dangers in the Interior of New York—Johnson Hall beleaguered—Sir John capitulates—Generous Conduct of Schuyler—Governor Tryon and the Tories—Tory Machinations—Lee at New York—Sir Henry Clinton in the Harbor—Menaces of Lee—The City and River fortified—Lee's Treatment of the Tories—His Plans of Fortification—Ordered to the Command in Canada—His Speculations on Titles of Dignity

SCHUYLER'S letter to Washington, announcing the recent events, was written with manly feeling. "I wish," said he, "I had no occasion to send my dear general this melancholy account. My amiable friend, the gallant Montgomery, is no more; the brave Arnold is wounded; and we have met with a severe check in an unsuccessful attempt on Quebec. May Heaven be graciously pleased that the misfortune may terminate here! I tremble for our people in Canada."

Alluding to his recent request to retire from the army, he writes: "Our affairs are much worse than when I made the request. This is motive sufficient for me to continue to serve my country in any way I can be thought most service-

able; but my utmost can be but little, weak and indisposed as I am."

Washington was deeply moved by the disastrous intelligence. "I most sincerely condole with you," writes he, in reply to Schuyler, "upon the fall of the brave and worthy Montgomery. In the death of this gentleman, America has sustained a heavy loss. I am much concerned for the intrepid and enterprising Arnold, and greatly fear that consequences of the most alarming nature will result from this well-intended, but unfortunate attempt."

General Schuyler, who was now in Albany, urged the necessity of an immediate re-enforcement of three thousand men for the army in Canada. Washington had not a man to spare from the army before Boston. He applied, therefore, on his own responsibility, to Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, for three regiments, which were granted. His prompt measure received the approbation of Congress, and further re enforcements were ordered from the same quarters.

Solicitude was awakened about the interior of the province of New York. Arms and ammunition were said to be concealed in Tryon County, and numbers of the tories in that neighborhood preparing for hostilities. Sir John Johnson had fortified Johnson Hall, gathered about him his Scotch Highland tenants and Indian allies, and it was rumored he intended to carry fire and sword along the valley of the Mohawk.

Schuyler, in consequence, received orders from Congress to take measures for securing the military stores, disarming the disaffected, and apprehending their chiefs. He forthwith hastened from Albany, at the head of a body of soldiers; was joined by Colonel Herkimer, with the militia of Tryon

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County marshaled forth on the frozen bosom of the Mohawk River, and appeared before Sir John's stronghold, near Johnstown, on the 19th of January.

Thus beleaguered, Sir John, after much negotiation, capitulated. He was to surrender all weapons of war and military stores in his possession, and to give his parole not to take arms against America. On these conditions he was to be at liberty to go as far westward in Tryon County as the German Flats and Kingsland districts, and to every part of the colony to the southward and eastward of these districts: provided he did not go into any seaport town.

Sir John intimated a trust that he, and the gentlemen with him, would be permitted to retain such arms as were their own property. The reply was characteristic: "General Schuyler's feelings as a gentleman induce him to consent that Sir John Johnson may retain the few favorite family arms, he making a list of them. General Schuyler never refused a gentleman his side-arms."

The capitulation being adjusted, Schuyler ordered his troops to be drawn up in line at noon (Jan. 20th), between his quarters and the Court House, to receive the surrender of the Highlanders, enjoining profound silence on his officers and men, when the surrender should be made. Everything was conducted with great regard to the feelings of Sir John's Scottish adherents; they marched to the front, grounded their arms, and were dismissed with exhortations to good behavior.

The conduct of Schuyler throughout this affair drew forth a resolution of Congress, applauding him for his fidelity, prudence and expedition, and the proper temper he had maintained toward the "deluded people" in question. Washington, too, congratulated him on his success. "I hope," writes

he, "General Lee will execute a work of the same kind on Long Island. It is high time to begin with our internal foes, when we are threatened with such severity of chastisement from our kind parent without."

The recent reverses in Canada had, in fact, heightened the solicitude of Washington about the province of New York. That province was the central and all-important link in the confederacy; but he feared it might prove a brittle one. We have already mentioned the adverse influences in operation there. A large number of friends to the crown, among the official and commercial classes; rank tories (as they were called), in the city and about the neighboring country; particularly on Long and Staten Islands; king's ships at anchor in the bay and harbor, keeping up a suspicious intercourse with the citizens; while Governor Tryon, castled, as it were, on board one of these ships, carried on intrigues with those disaffected to the popular cause, in all parts of the neighborhood. County committees had been empowered by the New York Congress and Convention, to apprehend all persons notoriously disaffected, to examine into their conduct, and ascertain whether they were guilty of any hostile act or machination. Imprisonment or banishment was the penalty. The committees could call upon the militia to aid in the discharge of their functions. Still, disaffection to the cause was said to be rife in the province, and Washington looked to General Lee for effective measures to suppress it.

Lee arrived at New York on the 4th of February, his caustic humors sharpened by a severe attack of the gout, which had rendered it necessary, while on the march, to carry him for a considerable part of the way in a litter. His correspondence is a complete mental barometer. "I consider

it as a piece of the greatest good fortune," writes he to Washington (Feb. 5th), "that the Congress have detached a committee to this place, otherwise I should have made a most ridiculous figure, besides bringing upon myself the enmity of the whole province. My hands were effectually tied up from taking any step necessary for the public service by the late resolve of Congress, putting every detachment of the Continental forces under the command of the Provincial Congress where such detachment is."

By a singular coincidence, on the very day of his arrival Sir Henry Clinton, with the squadron which had sailed so mysteriously from Boston, looked into the harbor. "Though it was Sabbath," says a letter-writer of the day, "it threw the whole city into such a convulsion as it never knew before. Many of the inhabitants hastened to move their effects into the country, expecting an immediate conflict. All that day and all night were there carts going and boats loading, and women and children crying, and distressed voices heard in the roads in the dead of the night." *

Clinton sent for the mayor, and expressed much surprise and concern at the distress caused by his arrival; which was merely, he said, on a short visit to his friend Tryon, and to see how matters stood. He professed a juvenile love for the place, and desired that the inhabitants might be informed of the purport of his visit, and that he would go away as soon as possible.

"He brought no troops with him," writes Lee, "and pledges his honor that none are coming. He says it is merely a visit to his friend Tryon. If it is really so, it is the most whimsical piece of civility I ever heard of."

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* Remembrancer, vol. iii.

A gentleman in New York, writing to a friend in Philadelphia, reports one of the general's characteristic menaces which kept the town in a fever.

"Lee says he will send word on board of the men-of-war that, if they set a house on fire, he will chain a hundred of their friends by the neck, and make the house their funeral pile." *

For this time, the inhabitants of New York were let off for their fears. Clinton, after a brief visit, continued his mysterious cruise, openly avowing his destination to be North Carolina—which nobody believed, simply because he avowed it.

The Duke of Manchester, speaking in the House of Lords of the conduct of Clinton, contrasts it with that of Lord Dunmore, who wrapped Norfolk in flames. "I will pass no censure on that noble lord," said he, "but I could wish that he had acted with that generous spirit that forbade Clinton uselessly to destroy the town of New York. My lords, Clinton visited New York; the inhabitants expected its destruction. Lee appeared before it with an army too powerful to be attacked, and Clinton passed by without doing any wanton damage."

The necessity of conferring with committees at every step was a hard restraint upon a man of Lee's ardent and impatient temper, who had a soldierlike contempt for the men of peace around him; yet at the outset he bore it better than might have been expected.

"The Congress committees, a certain number of the committees of safety, and your humble servant," writes he to Washington, "have had two conferences. The result is such

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* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iv. 941.

as will agreeably surprise you. It is in the first place agreed, and justly, that to fortify the town against shipping is impracticable; but we are to fortify lodgments on some commanding part of the city for two thousand men. We are to erect inclosed batteries on both sides of the water, near Hell Gate, which will answer the double purpose of securing the town against piracies through the Sound, and secure our communication with Long Island, now become a more important point than ever; as it is determined to form a strong fortified camp of three thousand men, on the Island, immediately opposite to New York. The pass in these Highlands is to be made as respectable as possible, and guarded by a battalion. In short, I think the plan judicious and complete."

The pass in the Highlands above alluded to is that grand defile of the Hudson, where, for upward of fifteen miles, it wends its deep channel between stern, forest-clad mountains and rocky promontories. Two forts, about six miles distant from each other, and commanding narrow parts of the river at its bends through the Highlands, had been commenced in the preceding autumn, by order of the Continental Congress; but they were said to be insufficient for the security of that important pass, and were to be extended and strengthened.

Washington had charged Lee, in his instructions, to keep a stern eye upon the tories, who were active in New York. "You can seize upon the persons of the principals," said he; "they must be so notoriously known that there will be little danger of committing mistakes." Lee acted up to the letter of these instructions, and weeded out with a vigorous hand some of the rankest of the growth. This gave great offense to the peace-loving citizens, who insisted that he was arrogating a power vested solely in the civil authority. One of

them, well-affected to the cause, writes: "To see the vast number of houses shut up, one would think the city almost evacuated. Women and children are scarcely to be seen in the streets. Troops are daily coming in; they break open and quarter themselves in any house they find shut." *

The enemy, too, regarded his measures with apprehension. "That arch rebel Lee," writes a British officer, "has driven all the well-affected people from the town of New York. If something is not speedily done, his Britannic majesty's American dominions will be confined within a very narrow compass." †

In the exercise of his military functions, Lee set Governor Tryon and the captain of the "Asia" at defiance. "They had threatened perdition to the town," writes he to Washington, "if the cannon were removed from the batteries and wharfs, but I ever considered their threats as a *brutum fulmen*, and even persuaded the town to be of the same way of thinking. We accordingly conveyed them to a place of safety in the middle of the day, and no cannonade ensued. Captain Parker publishes a pleasant reason for his passive conduct. He says that it was manifestly my intention, and that of the New England men under my command, to bring destruction on this town, so hated for their loyal principles, but that he was determined not to indulge it; so remained quiet out of spite. The people here laugh at his nonsense, and begin to despise the menaces which formerly used to throw them into convulsions."

Washington appears to have shared the merriment. In his reply to Lee he writes, "I could not avoid laughing at Captain Parker's reasons for not putting his repeated threats

* Fred. Rhinelander to Peter Van Schaack, Feb. 23.
† Am. Archives, v. 425.

into execution"—a proof, by the way, under his own hand, that he could laugh occasionally; and even when surrounded by perplexities.

According to Lee's account, the New Yorkers showed a wonderful alacrity in removing the cannon. "Men and boys of all ages," writes he, "worked with the greatest zeal and pleasure. I really believe the generality are as well-affected as any on the continent." Some of the well-affected, however, thought he was rather too self-willed and high-handed. "Though General Lee has many things to recommend him as a general," writes one of them, "yet I think he was out of luck when he ordered the removal of the guns from the battery; as it was without the approbation or knowledge of our Congress." *—Lee seldom waited for the approbation of Congress in moments of exigency.

He now proceeded with his plan of defenses. A strong redoubt, capable of holding three hundred men, was commenced at Horen's Hook, commanding the pass at Hell Gate, so as to block up from the enemy's ships the passage between the mainland and Long Island. A regiment was stationed on the island, making fascines and preparing other materials for constructing the works for an intrenched camp, which Lee hoped would render it impossible for the enemy to get a footing there. "What to do with this city," writes he, "I own, puzzles me. It is so encircled with deep navigable water that whoever commands the sea must command the town. To-morrow I shall begin to dismantle that part of the fort next to the town, to prevent its being converted into a citadel. I shall barrier the principal streets, and, at least, if I cannot make it a Continental garrison, it shall be a dis-

* Fred. Rhinelander to Peter Van Schaack.

putable field of battle." Batteries were to be erected on an eminence behind Trinity Church, to keep the enemy's ships at so great a distance as not to injure the town.

King's Bridge, at the upper end of Manhattan or New York Island, linking it with the mainland, was pronounced by Lee "a most important pass, without which the city could have no communication with Connecticut." It was, therefore, to be made as strong as possible.

Heavy cannon were to be sent up to the forts in the Highlands; which were to be enlarged and strengthened.

In the midst of his schemes, Lee received orders from Congress to the command in Canada, vacant by the death of Montgomery. He bewailed the defenseless condition of the city; the Continental Congress, as he said, not having, as yet, taken the least step for its security. "The instant I leave it," said he, "I conclude the Provincial Congress, and inhabitants in general, will relapse into their former hysterics. The men-of-war and Mr. Tryon will return to their old station at the wharfs, and the first regiments who arrive from England will take quiet possession of the town and Long Island."

It must be observed that, in consequence of his military demonstrations in the city, the enemy's ships had drawn off and dropped down the bay; and he had taken vigorous measures, without consulting the committees, to put an end to the practice of supplying them with provisions.

"Governor Tryon and the 'Asia,'" writes he to Washington, "continue between Nutten and Bedlow's Islands. It has pleased his Excellency, in violation of the compact he has made, to seize several vessels from Jersey laden with flour. It has, in return, pleased my Excellency to stop all provisions from the city, and cut off all intercourse with him

—a measure which has thrown the mayor, council and tories into agonies. The propensity, or rather rage, for paying court to this great man is inconceivable. They cannot be weaned from him. We must put wormwood on his paps, or they will cry to suck, as they are in their second childhood."

We would observe, in explanation of a sarcasm in the above quoted letter, that Lee professed a great contempt for the titles of respect which it was the custom to prefix to the names of men in office or command. He scoffed at them, as unworthy of "a great, free, manly, equal commonwealth." "For my own part," said he, "I would as lief they would put ratsbane in my mouth as the Excellency with which I am daily crammed. How much more true dignity was there in the simplicity of address among the Romans: Marcus Tullius Cicero, Decius Bruto Imperatori, or Caio Marcello Consuli, than to 'His Excellency Major-general Noodle,' or to the 'Honorable John Doodle.'"

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Monotonous State of Affairs before Boston—Washington anxious for Action—Exploit of Putnam—Its Dramatic Consequences—The Farce of the Blockade of Boston—An Alarming Interruption—Distresses of the Besieged—Washington's Irksome Predicament—His Bold Proposition—Demur of the Council of War—Arrival of Knox with Artillery—Dorchester Heights to be Seized and Fortified—Preparations for the Attempt

THE siege of Boston continued through the winter, without any striking incident to enliven its monotony. The British remained within their works, leaving the beleaguering army slowly to augment its forces. The country was dissatisfied with the inaction of the latter. Even Congress was

anxious for some successful blow that might revive popular enthusiasm. Washington shared this anxiety, and had repeatedly, in councils of war, suggested an attack upon the town, but had found a majority of his general officers opposed to it. He had hoped some favorable opportunity would present, when, the harbor being frozen, the troops might approach the town upon the ice. The winter, however, though severe at first, proved a mild one, and the bay continued open. General Putnam, in the meantime, having completed the new works at Lechmere Point, and being desirous of keeping up the spirit of his men, resolved to treat them to an exploit. Accordingly, from his "impregnable fortress" of Cobble Hill, he detached a party of about two hundred, under his favorite officer, Major Knowlton, to surprise and capture a British guard stationed at Charlestown. It was a daring enterprise, and executed with spirit. As Charlestown Neck was completely protected, Knowlton led his men across the milldam, round the base of the hill, and immediately below the fort; set fire to the guard-house and some buildings in its vicinity; made several prisoners, and retired without loss; although thundered upon by the cannon of the fort. The exploit was attended by a dramatic effect on which Putnam had not calculated. The British officers, early in the winter, had fitted up a theater, which was well attended by the troops and tories. On the evening in question, an afterpiece was to be performed, entitled "The Blockade of Boston," intended as a burlesque on the patriot army which was beleaguering it. Washington is said to have been represented in it as an awkward lout, equipped with a huge wig and a long rusty sword, attended by a country booby as orderly sergeant, in rustic garb, with an old firelock seven or eight feet long.

The theater was crowded, especially by the military. The first piece was over and the curtain was rising for the farce, when a sergeant made his appearance and announced that "the alarm guns were firing at Charlestown, and the Yankees attacking Bunker's Hill." At first this was supposed to be a part of the entertainment, until General Howe gave the word, "Officers, to your alarm posts."

Great confusion ensued; every one scrambled out of the theater as fast as possible. There was, as usual, some shrieking and fainting of ladies; and the farce of "The Blockade of Boston" had a more serious than comic termination.

The London "Chronicle," in a sneering comment on Boston affairs, gave Burgoyne as the author of this burlesque afterpiece, though perhaps unjustly. "General Burgoyne has opened a theatrical campaign, of which himself is sole manager, being determined to act with the Provincials on the defensive only. Tom Thumb has been already represented; while, on the other hand, the Provincials are preparing to exhibit early in the spring, 'Measure for Measure.'"

The British officers, like all soldiers by profession, endeavored to while away the time by every amusement within their reach; but, in truth, the condition of the besieged town was daily becoming more and more distressing. The inhabitants were without flour, pulse or vegetables; the troops were nearly as destitute. There was a lack of fuel, too, as well as food. The small-pox broke out, and it was necessary to inoculate the army. Men, women and children either left the city voluntarily, or were sent out of it; yet the distress increased. Several houses were broken open and plundered; others were demolished by the soldiery for fuel. General Howe resorted to the sternest measures to put a stop to these excesses. The provost was ordered to go the rounds with

the hangman, and hang up the first man he should detect in the fact, without waiting for further proof for trial. Offenders were punished with four hundred, six hundred, and even one thousand lashes. The wife of a private soldier, convicted of receiving stolen goods, was sentenced to one hundred lashes on her bare back, at the cart's tail, in different parts of the town, and an imprisonment of three months.

Meanwhile, Washington was incessantly goaded by the impatient murmurs of the public, as we may judge by his letters to Mr. Reed. "I know the integrity of my own heart," writes he, on the 10th of February; "but to declare it, unless to a friend, may be an argument of vanity. I know the unhappy predicament I stand in; I know that much is expected of me; I know that, without men, without arms, without ammunition, without anything fit for the accommodation of a soldier, little is to be done; and, what is mortifying, I know that I cannot stand justified to the world without exposing my own weakness, and injuring the cause by declaring my wants; which I am determined not to do, further than unavoidable necessity brings every man acquainted with them.

"My own situation is so irksome to me at times that, if I did not consult the public good more than my own tranquillity, I should long ere this have put everything on the cast of a die. So far from my having an army of twenty thousand men, well armed, I have been here with less than one-half of that number, including sick, furloughed and on command; and those neither armed nor clothed as they should be. In short, my situation has been such that I have been obliged to use art to conceal it from my own officers."

How precious are those letters! And how fortunate that

the absence of Mr. Reed from camp should have procured for us such confidential outpourings of Washington's heart at this time of its great trial.

He still adhered to his opinion in favor of an attempt upon the town. He was aware that it would be attended with considerable loss, but believed it would be successful if the men should behave well. Within a few days after the date of this letter the bay became sufficiently frozen for the transportation of troops. "This," writes he to Reed, "I thought, knowing the ice would not last, a favorable opportunity to make an assault upon the troops in town. I proposed it in council; but behold, though we had been waiting all the year for this favorable event, the enterprise was thought too dangerous. Perhaps it was; perhaps the irksomeness of my situation led me to undertake more than could be warranted by prudence. I did not think so, and I am sure yet that the enterprise, if it had been undertaken with resolution, must have succeeded; without it, any would fail." His proposition was too bold for the field-officers assembled in council (Feb. 16th), who objected that there was not force, nor arms and ammunition sufficient in camp for such an attempt. Washington acquiesced in the decision, it being almost unanimous; yet he felt the irksomeness of his situation. "To have the eyes of the whole continent," said he, "fixed with anxious expectation of hearing of some great event, and to be restrained in every military operation for want of the necessary means of carrying it on, is not very pleasing, especially as the means used to conceal my weakness from the enemy conceal it also from our friends and add to their wonder."

In the council of war above mentioned, a cannonade and bombardment were considered advisable, as soon as there

should be a sufficiency of powder; in the meantime, preparations might be made for taking possession of Dorchester Heights and Noddle's Island.

At length the camp was rejoiced by the arrival of Colonel Knox, with his long train of sledges drawn by oxen, bringing more than fifty cannon, mortars and howitzers, besides supplies of lead and flints. The zeal and perseverance which he had displayed in his wintry expedition across frozen lakes and snowy wastes, and the intelligence with which he had fulfilled his instructions, won him the entire confidence of Washington. His conduct in this enterprise was but an earnest of that energy and ability which he displayed throughout the war.

Further ammunition being received from the royal arsenal at New York and other quarters, and a re-enforcement of ten regiments of militia, Washington no longer met with opposition to his warlike measures. Lechmere Point, which Putnam had fortified, was immediately to be supplied with mortars and heavy cannon, so as to command Boston on the north; and Dorchester Heights, on the south of the town, were forthwith to be taken possession of. "If anything," said Washington, "will induce the enemy to hazard an engagement, it will be our attempting to fortify those heights, as, in that event taking place, we shall be able to command a great part of the town and almost the whole harbor." Their possession, moreover, would enable him to push his works to Nook's Hill and other points opposite Boston, whence a cannonade and bombardment must drive the enemy from the city.

The council of Massachusetts, at his request, ordered the militia of the towns contiguous to Dorchester and Roxbury to hold themselves in readiness to repair to the lines at those

places with arms, ammunition and accouterments on receiving a preconcerted signal.

Washington felt painfully aware how much depended upon the success of this attempt. There was a cloud of gloom and distrust lowering upon the public mind. Danger threatened on the north and on the south. Montgomery had fallen before the walls of Quebec. The army in Canada was shattered. Tryon and the tories were plotting mischief in New York. Dunmore was harassing the lower part of Virginia, and Clinton and his fleet were prowling along the coast on a secret errand of mischief.

Washington's general orders evince the solemn and anxious state of his feelings. In those of the 26th of February, he forbade all playing at cards and other games of chance. "At this time of public distress," writes he, "men may find enough to do in the service of God and their country without abandoning themselves to vice and immorality. . . . It is a noble cause we are engaged in; it is the cause of virtue and mankind; every advantage and comfort to us and our posterity depend upon the vigor of our exertions; in short, freedom or slavery must be the result of our conduct; there can, therefore, be no greater inducement to men to behave well. But it may not be amiss to the troops to know that if any man in action shall presume to skulk, hide himself, or retreat from the enemy without the orders of his commanding officer, he will be instantly shot down as an example of cowardice; cowards having too frequently disconcerted the best formed troops by their dastardly behavior."

In the general plan it was concerted that, should the enemy detach a large force to dislodge our men from Dorchester Heights, as had been done in the affair of Bunker's Hill, an attack upon the opposite side of the town should

forthwith be made by General Putnam For this purpose he was to have four thousand picked men in readiness, in two divisions, under Generals Sullivan and Greene. At a concerted signal from Roxbury they were to embark in boats near the mouth of Charles River, cross under cover of the fire of three floating batteries, land in two places in Boston, secure its strong posts, force the gates and works at the Neck, and let in the Roxbury troops.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Affair of Dorchester Heights—American and English Letters respecting it—A Laborious Night—Revelations at Daybreak—Howe in a Perplexity—A Night Attack meditated—Stormy Weather—The Town to be evacuated—Negotiations and Arrangements—Preparations to Embark—Excesses of the Troops—Boston evacuated—Speech of the Duke of Manchester on the Subject—A Medal voted by Congress

THE evening of Monday, the 4th of March, was fixed upon for the occupation of Dorchester Heights. The ground was frozen too hard to be easily intrenched; fascines, therefore, and gabions and bundles of screwed hay were collected during the two preceding nights with which to form breastworks and redoubts. During these two busy nights the enemy's batteries were cannonaded and bombarded from opposite points, to occupy their attention and prevent their noticing these preparations. They replied with spirit, and the incessant roar of artillery thus kept up covered completely the rumbling of wagons and ordnance.

How little the enemy were aware of what was impending we may gather from the following extract of a letter from an officer of distinction in the British army in Boston to his friend in London, dated on the 3d of March:

"For these last six weeks or near two months we have been better amused than could possibly be expected in our situation. We had a theater, we had balls, and there is actually a subscription on foot for a masquerade. England seems to have forgot us, and we have endeavored to forget ourselves. But we were roused to a sense of our situation last night in a manner unpleasant enough. The rebels have been for some time past erecting a bomb battery, and last night began to play upon us. Two shells fell not far from me. One fell upon Colonel Monckton's house, but luckily did not burst until it had crossed the street. Many houses were damaged, but no lives lost. The rebel army," adds he, "is not brave, I believe, but it is agreed on all hands that their artillery officers are at least equal to ours." *

The wife of John Adams, who resided in the vicinity of the American camp, and knew that a general action was meditated, expresses in a letter to her husband the feelings of a patriot woman during the suspense of these nights.

"I have been in a constant state of anxiety since you left me," writes she on Saturday. "It has been said to-morrow, and to-morrow for this month, and when the dreadful to-morrow will be, I know not. But hark! The house this instant shakes with the roar of cannon. I have been to the door, and find it is a cannonade from our army. Orders, I find, are come, for all the remaining militia to repair to the lines Monday night by twelve o'clock. No sleep for me to-night."

On Sunday the letter is resumed. "I went to bed after twelve, but got no rest; the cannon continued firing, and my heart kept pace with them all night. We have had a

* Am. Archives, 4th Series, v. 425.

pretty quiet day, but what to-morrow will bring forth God only knows." On Monday, the appointed evening, she continues: "I have just returned from Penn's Hill, where I have been sitting to hear the amazing roar of cannon, and from whence I could see every shell which was thrown. The sound, I think, is one of the grandest in nature, and is of the true species of the sublime. 'Tis now an incessant roar; but oh, the fatal ideas which are connected with the sound! How many of our dear countrymen must fall!

"I went to bed about twelve, and rose again a little after one. I could no more sleep than if I had been in the engagement; the rattling of the windows, the jar of the house, the continual roar of twenty-four pounders and the bursting of shells givs us such ideas, and realize a scene to us of which we could scarcely form any conception. I hope to give you joy of Boston, even if it is in ruins, before I send this away."

On the Monday evening thus graphically described, as soon as the firing commenced, the detachment under General Thomas set out on its cautious and secret march from the lines of Roxbury and Dorchester. Everything was conducted as regularly and quietly as possible. A covering party of eight hundred men preceded the carts with the intrenching tools; then came General Thomas with the working party, twelve hundred strong, followed by a train of three hundred wagons, laden was fascines, gabions and hay screwed into bundles of seven or eight hundred weight. A great number of such bundles were ranged in a line along Dorchester Neck on the side next the enemy, to protect the troops, while passing, from being raked by the fire of the enemy. Fortunately, although the moon, as Washington writes, was shining in its full luster, the flash and roar of cannonry from opposite points, and the bursting of bomb-

shells high in the air, so engaged and diverted the attention of the enemy that the detachment reached the heights about eight o'clock without being heard or perceived. The covering party then divided; one-half proceeded to the point nearest Boston, the other to the one nearest to Castle Williams. The working party commenced to fortify, under the directions of Gridley, the veteran engineer, who had planned the works on Bunker's Hill. It was severe labor, for the earth was frozen eighteen inches deep; but the men worked with more than their usual spirit; for the eye of the commander-in-chief was upon them. Though not called there by his duties, Washington could not be absent from this eventful operation. An eloquent orator has imagined his situation—"All around him intense movement; while nothing was to be heard excepting the tread of busy feet and the dull sound of the mattock upon the frozen soil. Beneath him the slumbering batteries of the castle; the roadsteads and harbor filled with the vessels of the royal fleet, motionless, except as they swung round at their moorings at the turn of the midnight tide; the beleaguered city occupied with a powerful army, and a considerable non-combatant population, startled into unnatural vigilance by the incessant and destructive cannonade, yet unobservant of the great operations in progress so near them; the surrounding country, dotted with a hundred rural settlements, roused from the deep sleep of a New England village by the unwonted glare and tumult." *

The same plastic fancy suggests the crowd of visions, phantoms of the past, which may have passed through Washington's mind on this night of feverish excitement.

* Oration of the Hon. Edward Everett at Dorchester, July 4th, 1855.

"His early training in the wilderness; his escape from drowning, and the deadly rifle of the savage in the perilous mission to Venango; the shower of iron hail through which he rode unharmed on Braddock's field; the early stages of the great conflict now brought to its crisis, and still more solemnly, the possibilities of the future for himself and for America—the ruin of the patriot cause if he failed at the outset; the triumphant consolidation of the Revolution if he prevailed."

The labors of the night were carried on by the Americans with their usual activity and address. When a relief party arrived at four o'clock in the morning, two forts were in sufficient forwardness to furnish protection against small-arms and grape-shot; and such use was made of the fascines and bundles of screwed hay that, at dawn, a formidable-looking fortress frowned along the height. We have the testimony of a British officer already quoted, for the fact. "This morning at daybreak we discovered two redoubts on Dorchester Point, and two smaller ones on their flanks. They were all raised during the last night, with an expedition equal to that of the genii belonging to Aladdin's wonderful lamp. From these hills they command the whole town, so that we must drive them from their post or desert the place."

Howe gazed at the mushroom fortress with astonishment, as it loomed indistinctly, but grandly, through a morning fog. "The rebels," exclaimed he, "have done more work in one night than my whole army would have done in one month."

Washington had watched, with intense anxiety, the effect of the revelation at daybreak. "When the enemy first discovered our works in the morning," writes he, "they seemed to be in great confusion, and, from their movements, to intend an attack."

An American, who was on Dorchester Heights, gives a picture of the scene. A tremendous cannonade was commenced from the forts in Boston and the shipping in the harbor. "Cannon shot," writes he, "are continually rolling and rebounding over the hill, and it is astonishing to observe how little our soldiers are terrified by them. The royal troops are perceived to be in motion, as if embarking to pass the harbor and land on Dorchester shore to attack our works. The hills and elevations in this vicinity are covered with spectators to witness deeds of horror in the expected conflict. His Excellency, General Washington, is present, animating and encouraging the soldiers, and they in return manifest their joy, and express a warm desire for the approach of the enemy; each man knows his own place. Our breastworks are strengthened, and among the means of defense are a great number of barrels, filled with stones and sand, and arranged in front of our works, which are to be put in motion and made to roll down the hill to break the legs of the assailants as they advance."

General Thomas was re-enforced with two thousand men. Old Putnam stood ready to make a descent upon the north side of the town with his four thousand picked men as soon as the heights on the south should be assailed: "All the forenoon," says the American above cited, "we were in momentary expectation of witnessing an awful scene; nothing less than the carnage of Breed's Hill battle was expected."

As Washington rode about the heights he reminded the troops that it was the 5th of March, the anniversary of the Boston massacre, and called on them to revenge the slaughter of their brethren. They answered him with shouts. "Our officers and men," writes he, "appeared impatient for

the appeal. The event I think must have been fortunate; nothing less than success and victory on our side."

Howe, in the meantime, was perplexed between his pride and the hazards of his position. In his letters to the ministry he had scouted the idea of "being in danger from the rebels." He had "hoped they would attack him." Apparently, they were about to fulfill his hopes, and with formidable advantages of position. He must dislodge them from Dorchester Heights or evacuate Boston. The latter was an alternative too mortifying to be readily adopted. He resolved on an attack, but it was to be a night one.

"A body of light infantry, under the command of Major Mulgrave, and a body of grenadiers, are to embark to-night at seven," writes the gay British officer already quoted. "I think it likely to be a general affair. Adieu balls, masquerades, etc., for this may be looked upon as the opening of the campaign."

In the evening the British began to move. Lord Percy was to lead the attack. Twenty-five hundred men were embarked in transports, which were to convey them to the rendezvous at Castle Williams. A violent storm set in from the east. The transports could not reach their place of destination. The men-of-war could not cover and support them. A furious surf beat on the shore where the boats would have to land. The attack was consequently postponed until the following day.

That day was equally unpropitious. The storm continued, with torrents of rain. The attack was again postponed. In the meantime, the Americans went on strengthening their works; by the time the storm subsided General Howe deemed them too strong to be easily carried; the attempt, therefore, was relinquished altogether.

What was to be done? The shells thrown from the heights into the town proved that it was no longer tenable. The fleet was equally exposed. Admiral Shuldham, the successor to Graves, assured Howe that if the Americans maintained possession of the heights his ships could not remain in the harbor. It was determined, therefore, in a council of war, to evacuate the place as soon as possible. But now came on a humiliating perplexity. The troops, in embarking, would be exposed to a destructive fire. How was this to be prevented? General Howe's pride would not suffer him to make capitulations; he endeavored to work on the fears of the Bostonians by hinting that if his troops were molested while embarking he might be obliged to cover their retreat by setting fire to the town.

The hint had its effect. Several of the principal inhabitants communicated with him through the medium of General Robertson. The result of the negotiation was that a paper was concocted and signed by several of the "selectmen" of Boston, stating the fears they had entertained of the destruction of the place, but that those fears had been quieted by General Howe's declaration that it should remain uninjured provided his troops were unmolested while embarking; the selectmen, therefore, begged "some assurances that so dreadful a calamity might not be brought on by any measures from without."

This paper was sent out from Boston on the evening of the 8th, with a flag of truce, which bore it to the American lines at Roxbury. There it was received by Colonel Learned and carried by him to headquarters. Washington consulted with such of the general officers as he could immediately assemble. The paper was not addressed to him, nor to any one else. It was not authenticated by the signature of Gen-

eral Howe; nor was there any other act obliging that commander to fulfill the promise asserted to have been made by him. It was deemed proper, therefore, that Washington should give no answer to the paper; but that Colonel Learned should signify, in a letter, his having laid it before the commander-in-chief, and the reasons assigned for not answering it.

With this uncompromising letter, the flag returned to Boston. The Americans suspended their fire, but continued to fortify their positions. On the night of the 9th a detachment was sent to plant a battery on Nook's Hill, an eminence at Dorchester, which lies nearest to Boston Neck. A fire kindled behind the hill revealed the project. It provoked a cannonade from the British, which was returned with interest from Cobble Hill, Lechmere Point, Cambridge, and Roxbury. The roar of cannonry and bursting of bombshells prevailed from half after eight at night until six in the morning. It was another night of terror to the people of Boston; but the Americans had to desist for the present from the attempt to fortify Nook's Hill. Among the accidents of the bombardment was the bursting of Putnam's vaunted mortar, "the Congress."

Daily preparations were now made by the enemy for departure. By proclamation, the inhabitants were ordered to deliver up all linen and woolen goods, and all other goods that, in possession of the rebels, would aid them in carrying on the war. Crean Bush, a New York tory, was authorized to take possession of such goods, and put them on board of two of the transports. Under cover of his commission he and his myrmidons broke open stores and stripped them of their contents. Marauding gangs from the fleet and army followed their example, and extended their depreda-

tions to private houses. On the 14th, Howe, in a general order, declared that the first soldier caught plundering should be hanged on the spot. Still on the 16th houses were broken open, goods destroyed, and furniture defaced by the troops. Some of the furniture, it is true, belonged to the officers, and was destroyed because they could neither sell it nor carry it away.

The letter of a British officer gives a lively picture of the hurried preparations for retreat. "Our not being burdened with provisions permitted us to save some stores and ammunition, the light field-pieces, and such things as were most convenient of carriage. The rest, I am sorry to say, we were obliged to leave behind; such of the guns as by dismounting we could throw into the sea was so done. The carriages were disabled, and every precaution taken that our circumstances would permit; for our retreat was by agreement. The people of the town who were friends to government took care of nothing but their merchandise, and found means to employ the men belonging to the transports in embarking their goods, so that several of the vessels were entirely filled with private property, instead of the king's stores. By some unavoidable accident, the medicines, surgeons' chests, instruments and necessaries were left in the hospital. The confusion unavoidable to such a disaster will make you conceive how much must be forgot where every man had a private concern. The necessary care and distress of the women, children, sick, and wounded, required every assistance that could be given. It was not like breaking up a camp, where every man knows his duty; it was like departing your country with your wives, your servants, your household furniture, and all your encumbrances. The officers, who felt the disgrace of their retreat, did their utmost to

keep up appearances. The men, who thought they were changing for the better, strove to take advantage of the present times and were kept from plunder and drink with difficulty." *

For some days the embarkation of the troops was delayed by adverse winds. Washington, who was imperfectly informed of affairs in Boston, feared that the movements there might be a feint. Determined to bring things to a crisis, he detached a force to Nook's Hill on Saturday, the 16th, which threw up a breastwork in the night, regardless of the cannonading of the enemy. This commanded Boston Neck and the south part of the town, and a deserter brought a false report to the British that a general assault was intended.

The embarkation, so long delayed, began with hurry and confusion at four o'clock in the morning. The harbor of Boston soon presented a striking and tumultuous scene. There were seventy-eight ships and transports casting loose for sea, and eleven or twelve thousand men, soldiers, sailors, and refugees, hurrying to embark; many, especially of the latter, with their families and personal effects. The refugees, in fact, labored under greater disadvantages than the king's troops, being obliged to man their own vessels, as sufficient seamen could not be spared from the king's transports. Speaking of those "who had taken upon themselves the style and title of government men" in Boston, and acted an unfriendly part in this great contest, Washington observes: "By all accounts there never existed a more miserable set of beings than these wretched creatures now are. Taught to believe that the power of Great Britain was superior to all opposition, and that foreign aid, if not, was at hand, they

* Remembrancer, vol. iii., p. 108.

were even higher and more insulting in their opposition than the Regulars. When the order issued, therefore, for embarking the troops in Boston, no electric shock—no sudden clap of thunder—in a word, the last trump could not have struck them with greater consternation. They were at their wits' end, and, conscious of their black ingratitude, chose to commit themselves, in the manner I have above described, to the mercy of the waves at a tempestuous season, rather than meet their offended countrymen." *

While this tumultuous embarkation was going on, the Americans looked on in silence from their batteries on Dorchester Heights, without firing a shot. "It was lucky for the inhabitants now left in Boston that they did not," writes a British officer; "for I am informed everything was prepared to set the town in a blaze, had they fired one cannon." †

At an early hour of the morning the troops stationed at Cambridge and Roxbury had paraded, and several regiments under Putnam had embarked in boats and dropped down Charles River to Sewall's Point, to watch the movements of the enemy by land and water. About nine o'clock a large body of troops were seen marching down Bunker's Hill, while boats full of soldiers were putting off for the shipping. Two scouts were sent from the camp to reconnoiter. The works appeared still to be occupied, for sentries were posted about them with shouldered muskets. Observing them to be motionless, the scouts made nearer scrutiny, and discovered them to be mere effigies, set up to delay the advance of the Americans. Pushing on, they found the works de-

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* Letter to John A. Washington, Am. Arch., 4th Series, v. 560.

† Frothingham, Siege of Boston, p. 310.

serted, and gave signal of the fact; whereupon, a detachment was sent from the camp to take possession.

Part of Putnam's troops were now sent back to Cambridge; a part were ordered forward to occupy Boston. General Ward, too, with five hundred men, made his way from Roxbury, across the Neck, about which the enemy had scattered caltrops, or crow's feet,* to impede invasion. The gates were unbarred and thrown open, and the Americans entered in triumph, with drums beating and colors flying.

By ten o'clock the enemy were all embarked and under way: Putnam had taken command of the city and occupied the important points, and the flag of thirteen stripes, the standard of the Union, floated above all the forts.

On the following day Washington himself entered the town, where he was joyfully welcomed. He beheld around him sad traces of the devastation caused by the bombardment, though not to the extent that he had apprehended. There were evidences, also, of the haste with which the British had retreated—five pieces of ordnance with their trunnions knocked off; others hastily spiked; others thrown off the wharf. "General Howe's retreat," writes Washington, "was precipitate beyond anything I could have conceived. The destruction of the stores at Dunbar's camp, after Braddock's defeat, was but a faint image of what may be seen in Boston; artillery carts cut to pieces in one place, gun carriages in another; shells broke here, shots buried there, and everything carrying with it the face of disorder and confusion, as also of distress." †

To add to the mortification of General Howe, he received,

* Iron balls, with four sharp points, to wound the feet of men or horses.

† Lee's Memoirs, p. 162.

we are told, while sailing out of the harbor, dispatches from the ministry, approving the resolution he had so strenuously expressed of maintaining his post until he should receive re-enforcements.

As the smallpox prevailed in some parts of the town, precautions were taken by Washington for its purification; and the main body of the army did not march in until the 20th. "The joy manifested in the countenance of the inhabitants," says an observer, "was overcast by the melancholy gloom caused by ten tedious months of siege"; but when, on the 22d, the people from the country crowded into the town, "it was truly interesting," writes the same observer, "to witness the tender interviews and fond embraces of those who had been long separated under circumstances so peculiarly distressing." *

Notwithstanding the haste with which the British army was embarked, the fleet lingered for some days in Nantucket Road. Apprehensive that the enemy, now that their forces were collected in one body, might attempt by some blow to retrieve their late disgrace, Washington hastily threw up works on Fort Hill, which commanded the harbor, and demolished those which protected the town from the neighboring country. The fleet at length disappeared entirely from the coast, and the deliverance of Boston was assured.

The eminent services of Washington throughout this arduous siege, his admirable management, by which, "in the course of a few months, *an undisciplined band of husbandmen* became soldiers, and were enabled to invest, for nearly a year, and finally to expel a brave army of veterans, commanded by the most experienced generals," drew forth

* Thacher's Military Journal, p. 50.

the enthusiastic applause of the nation. No higher illustration of this great achievement need be given than the summary of it contained in the speech of a British statesman, the Duke of Manchester, in the House of Lords. "The army of Britain," said he, "equipped with every possible essential of war; a chosen army, with chosen officers, backed by the power of a mighty fleet, sent to correct revolted subjects; sent to chastise a resisting city; sent to assert Britain's authority—has for many tedious months been imprisoned within that town by the Provincial army; who, with their watchful guards, permitted them no inlet to the country; who braved all their efforts, and defied all their skill and ability in war could ever attempt. One way, indeed, of escape, was left; the fleet is yet respected; to the fleet the army has recourse; and British generals, whose name never met with a blot of dishonor, are forced to quit that town which was the first object of the war, the immediate cause of hostilities, the place of arms which has cost this nation more than a million to defend."

We close this eventful chapter of Washington's history with the honor decreed to him by the highest authority of his country. On motion of John Adams, who had first moved his nomination as commander-in-chief, a unanimous vote of thanks to him was passed in Congress; and it was ordered that a gold medal be struck, commemorating the evacuation of Boston, bearing the effigy of Washington as its deliverer.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Destination of the Fleet—Commission of the two Howes—Character of Lord Howe—The Colonies divided into Departments—Lee assigned to the Southern Department—General Thomas to Canada—Character of Lee, by Washington—Letters of Lee from the South—A Dog in a Dancing School—Committee of Safety in Virginia—Lee's Grenadiers—Putnam in Command at New York—State of Affairs there—Arrival of Washington—New Arrangements—Perplexities with respect to Canada—England subsidizes Hessian troops

THE British fleet bearing the army from Boston had disappeared from the coast. "Whither they are bound, and where they next will pitch their tents," writes Washington, "I know not." He conjectured their destination to be New York, and made his arrangements accordingly; but he was mistaken. General Howe had steered for Halifax, there to await the arrival of strong re-enforcements from England, and the fleet of his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, who was to be commander-in-chief of the naval forces on the North American station.

It was thought these brothers would co-operate admirably in the exercise of their relative functions on land and water. Yet they were widely different in their habits and dispositions. Sir William, easy, indolent, and self-indulgent, "hated business," we are told, "and never did any. Lord Howe loved it, dwelt upon it, never could leave it." Besides his nautical commands, he had been treasurer of the navy, member of the board of admiralty, and had held a seat in Parliament; where, according to Walpole, he

was "silent as a rock," excepting when naval affairs were under discussion; when he spoke briefly and to the point. "My Lord Howe," said George II., "your life has been a continued series of services to your country." He was now about fifty-one years of age, tall, and well-proportioned like his brother; but wanting his ease of deportment. His complexion was dark, his countenance grave and strongly marked, and he had a shy reserve, occasionally mistaken for haughtiness. As a naval officer, he was esteemed resolute and enterprising, yet cool and firm. In his younger days he had contracted a friendship for Wolfe; "it was like the union of cannon and gunpowder," said Walpole. Howe, strong in mind, solid in judgment, firm of purpose, was said to be the cannon; Wolfe, quick in conception, prompt in execution, impetuous in action—the gunpowder.* The bravest man, we are told, could not wish for a more able or more gallant commander than Howe, and the sailors used to say of him, "Give us Black Dick, and we fear nothing."

Such is his lordship's portrait as sketched by English pencils; we shall see hereafter how far his conduct conforms to it. At present we must consider the state of the American army, in the appointment and commands of which various changes had recently taken place.

It was presumed the enemy, in the ensuing campaign, would direct their operations against the Middle and Southern colonies. Congress divided those colonies into two departments; one, comprehending New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, was to be under the command of a major-general and two brigadier-generals; the other, comprising Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, to

* Barrow's Life of Earl Howe, p. 400.

be under the command of a major-general and four brigadiers.

In this new arrangement, the orders destining General Lee to Canada were superseded, and he was appointed to the command of the Southern department, where he was to keep watch upon the movements of Sir Henry Clinton. He was somewhat dissatisfied with the change in his destination. "As I am the only general officer on the continent," writes he to Washington, "who can speak or think in French, I confess I think it would have been more prudent to have sent me to Canada; but I shall obey with alacrity, and I hope with success."

In reply, Washington observes, "I was just about to congratulate you on your appointment to the command in Canada when I received the account that your destination was altered. As a Virginian, I must rejoice at the change, but, as an American, I think you would have done more essential service to the common cause in Canada. For, besides the advantage of speaking and thinking in French, an officer who is acquainted with their manners and customs, and has traveled in their country, must certainly take the strongest hold of their affection and confidence."

The command in Canada was given to General Thomas, who had distinguished himself at Roxbury, and was promoted to the rank of major-general. It would have been given to Schuyler, but for the infirm state of his health; still Congress expressed a reliance on his efforts to complete the work "so conspicuously begun and well conducted" under his orders in the last campaign; and as not merely the success but the very existence of the army in Canada would depend on supplies sent from these colonies across the lakes, he was required, until further orders, to fix his headquarters

at Albany, where, without being exposed to the fatigue of the camp until his health was perfectly restored, he would be in a situation to forward supplies; to superintend the operations necessary for the defense of New York and the Hudson River, and the affairs of the whole middle department.

Lee set out for the South on the 7th of March, carrying with him his bold spirit, his shrewd sagacity, and his whimsical and splenetic humors. The following admirably impartial sketch is given of him by Washington, in a letter to his brother Augustine: "He is the first in military knowledge and experience we have in the whole army. He is zealously attached to the cause; honest and well-meaning, but rather fickle and violent, I fear, in his temper. However, as he possesses an uncommon share of good sense and spirit, I congratulate my countrymen on his appointment to that department." *

We give by anticipation a few passages from Lee's letters, illustrative of his character and career. The news of the evacuation of Boston reached him in Virginia. In a letter to Washington, dated Williamsburg, April 5, he expresses himself on the subject with generous warmth. "My dear general," writes he, "I most sincerely congratulate you; I congratulate the public on the great and glorious event, your possession of Boston. It will be a most bright page in the annals of America, and a most abominable black one in those of the beldam Britain. Go on, my dear general; crown yourself with glory, and establish the liberties and luster of your country on a foundation more permanent than the Capitol Rock."

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* Force's Am. Archives, 4th Series, v. 562.

Then reverting to himself, his subacid humors work up, and he shows that he had been as much annoyed in Williamsburg, by the interference of committees, as he had been in New York. "My situation," writes he, "is just as I expected. I am afraid I shall make a shabby figure, without any real demerits of my own. I am like a dog in a dancing-school; I know not where to turn myself, where to fix myself. The circumstances of the country, intersected with navigable rivers; the uncertainty of the enemy's designs and motions, who can fly in an instant to any spot they choose, with their canvas wings, throw me, or would throw Julius Cæsar, into this inevitable dilemma; I may possibly be in the north, when, as Richard says, I should serve my sovereign in the west. I can only act from surmise, and have a very good chance of surmising wrong. I am sorry to grate your ears with a truth, but must, at all events, assure you that the Provincial Congress of New York are angels of decision when compared with your countrymen, the committee of safety assembled at Williamsburg. Page, Lee, Mercer, and Payne, are, indeed, exceptions; but from Pendleton, Bland, the Treasurer, and Co.—*Libera nos domine!*"

Lee's letters from Virginia, written at a later date, were in a better humor. "There is a noble spirit in this province pervading all orders of men; if the same becomes universal, we shall be saved. I am, fortunately for my own happiness, and, I think, for the well-being of the community, on the best terms with the senatorial part, as well as the people at large. I shall endeavor to preserve their confidence and good opinion." *

And in a letter to Washington:

"I have formed two companies of grenadiers to each

* Force's Am. Archives, 4th Series, v. 792.

regiment, and with spears thirteen feet long. Their rifles (for they are all riflemen) sling over their shoulders, their appearance is formidable, and the men are conciliated to the weapon. . . . I am likewise furnishing myself with four-ounced rifled amusettes, which will carry an infernal distance; the two-ounced hit a half sheet of paper at five hundred yards' distance."

On Lee's departure for the South, Brigadier-general Lord Stirling had remained in temporary command at New York. Washington, however, presuming that the British fleet had steered for that port with the force which had evacuated Boston, hastened detachments thither under Generals Heath and Sullivan, and wrote for three thousand additional men to be furnished by Connecticut. The command of the whole he gave to General Putnam, who was ordered to fortify the city and the passes of the Hudson, according to the plans of General Lee. In the meantime, Washington delayed to come on himself until he should have pushed forward the main body of his army by divisions.

Lee's anticipations that laxity and confusion would prevail after his departure were not realized. The veteran Putnam, on taking command, put the city under rigorous military rule. The soldiers were to retire to their barracks and quarters at the beating of the tattoo, and remain there until the reveille in the morning. The inhabitants were subjected to the same rule. None were permitted to pass a sentry without the countersign, which would be furnished to them on applying to any of the brigade majors. All communication between the "ministerial fleet" and the shore was stopped; the ships were no longer to be furnished with provisions. Any person taken in the act of holding com-

munication with them would be considered an enemy and treated accordingly.

We have a lively picture of the state of the city in letters written at the time, and already cited. "When you are informed that New York is deserted by its old inhabitants and filled with soldiers from New England, Philadelphia, Jersey, etc., you will naturally conclude the environs of it are not very safe from so undisciplined a multitude as our Provincials are represented to be; but I do believe there are very few instances of so great a number of men together with so little mischief done by them. They have all the simplicity of plowmen in their manners, and seem quite strangers to the vices of older soldiers; they have been employed in creating fortifications in every part of the town. . . . Governor Tryon loses his credit with the people here prodigiously; he has lately issued a proclamation, desiring the deluded people of this colony to return to their obedience, promising a speedy support to the friends of government, declaring a door of mercy open to the penitent, and a rod for the disobedient, etc. The friends of government were provoked at being so distinguished, and the friends to liberty hanged him in effigy and printed a dying speech for him. A letter, too, was intercepted from him, hastening Lord Howe to New York, as the rebels were fortifying. These have entirely lost him the good will of the people. . . . You cannot think how sorry I am the governor has so lost himself, a man once so much beloved. Oh, Lucifer, once the son of morn, how fallen! General Washington is expected hourly; General Putnam is here, with several other generals and some of their ladies. . . . The variety of reports keeps one's mind always in agitation. Clinton and Howe have set the continent a-racing from Boston to Carolina. Clinton

came into our harbor: away flew the women, children, goods, and chattels, and in came the soldiers flocking from every part. No sooner was it known that he was not going to land here than expresses were sent to Virginia and Carolina to put them on their guard; his next expedition was to Virginia; there they were ready to receive him; from thence, without attempting to land, he sailed to Carolina. Now General Howe is leading us another dance." *

Washington came on by the way of Providence, Norwich and New London, expediting the embarkation of troops from these posts, and arrived at New York on the 13th of April. Many of the works which Lee had commenced were by this time finished; others were in progress. It was apprehended the principal operations of the enemy would be on Long Island, the high grounds of which in the neighborhood of Brooklyn commanded the city. Washington saw that an able and efficient officer was needed at that place. Greene was accordingly stationed there, with a division of the army. He immediately proceeded to complete the fortifications of that important post, and to make himself acquainted with the topography and the defensive points of the surrounding country.

The aggregate force distributed at several extensive posts in New York and its environs, and on Long Island, Staten Island and elsewhere, amounted to little more than ten thousand men; some of those were on the sick list, others absent on command, or on furlough; there were but about eight thousand available and fit for duty. These, too, were without pay; those recently enlisted without arms, and no one could say where arms were to be procured.

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* Remembrancer, vol. iii., p. 85.

Washington saw the inadequacy of the force to the purpose required, and was full of solicitude about the security of a place, the central point of the Confederacy and the grand deposit of ordnance and military stores. He was aware, too, of the disaffection to the cause among many of the inhabitants, and apprehensive of treachery. The process of fortifying the place had induced the ships of war to fall down into the outer bay, within the Hook, upward of twenty miles from the city; but Governor Tryon was still on board of one of them, keeping up an active correspondence with the tories on Staten and Long Islands and in other parts of the neighborhood.

Washington took an early occasion to address an urgent letter to the committee of safety, pointing out the dangerous and even treasonable nature of this correspondence. He had more weight and influence with that body than had been possessed by General Lee, and procured the passage of a resolution prohibiting, under severe penalties, all intercourse with the king's ships.

Headquarters, at this time, was a scene of incessant toil on the part of the commander-in-chief, his secretaries and aides-de-camp. "I give in to no kind of amusements myself," writes he, "and consequently those about me can have none, but are confined from morning until evening hearing and answering applications and letters." The presence of Mrs. Washington was a solace in the midst of these stern military cares, and diffused a feminine grace and decorum and a cheerful spirit over the domestic arrangements of headquarters, where everything was conducted with simplicity and dignity. The wives of some of the other generals and officers rallied around Mrs. Washington, but social intercourse was generally at an end. "We all live here,"

writes a lady of New York, "like nuns shut up in a nunnery. No society with the town, for there are none there to visit; neither can we go in or out after a certain hour without the countersign."

In addition to his cares about the security of New York, Washington had to provide for the perilous exigencies of the army in Canada. Since his arrival in the city four regiments of troops, a company of riflemen and another of artificers had been detached under the command of Brigadier-general Thompson, and a further corps of six regiments under Brigadier-general Sullivan, with orders to join General Thomas as soon as possible.

Still Congress inquired of him whether further re-enforcements to the army in Canada would not be necessary, and whether they could be spared from the army in New York. His reply shows the peculiar perplexities of his situation, and the tormenting uncertainty in which he was kept as to where the next storm of war would break. "With respect to sending more troops to that country, I am really at a loss what to advise, as it is impossible at present to know the designs of the enemy. Should they send the whole force under General Howe up the river St. Lawrence, to relieve Quebec and recover Canada, the troops gone and now going will be insufficient to stop their progress; and, should they think proper to send that, or an equal force, this way from Great Britain, for the purpose of possessing this city and securing the navigation of Hudson's River, the troops left here will not be sufficient to oppose them; and yet, for anything we know, I think it is not improbable they may attempt both; both being of the greatest importance to them, if they have men. I could wish, indeed, that the army in Canada should be more powerfully re-enforced; at the same time, I am conscious

that the trusting of this important post, which is now become the grand magazine of America, to the handful of men remaining here, is running too great a risk. The securing of this post and Hudson's River is to us also of so great importance that I cannot, at present, advise the sending any more troops from hence; on the contrary, the general officers now here, whom I thought it my duty to consult, think it absolutely necessary to increase the army at this place with at least ten thousand men; especially when it is considered that from this place only the army in Canada must draw its supplies of ammunition, provisions, and most probably of men."

Washington at that time was not aware of the extraordinary expedients England had recently resorted to against the next campaign. The Duke of Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse Cassel, and the Hereditary Prince of Cassel, Count of Hanau, had been subsidized to furnish troops to assist in the subjugation of her colonies. Four thousand three hundred Brunswick troops and nearly thirteen thousand Hessians had entered the British service. Besides the subsidy exacted by the German princes, they were to be paid seven pounds four shillings and fourpence sterling for every soldier furnished by them, and as much more for every one slain.

Of this notable arrangement Washington, as we observed, was not yet aware. "The designs of the enemy," writes he, "are too much behind the curtain for me to form any accurate opinion of their plan of operations for the summer's campaign. We are left to wander, therefore, in the field of conjecture." *

* Letter to the President of Congress, 5th May.

Within a few days afterward he had vague accounts of "Hessians and Hanoverian troops coming over"; but it was not until the 17th of May, when he received letters from General Schuyler, inclosing others from the commanders in Canada, that he knew in what direction some of these bolts of war were lanched; and this calls for some further particulars of the campaign on the banks of the St. Lawrence; which we shall give to the reader in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Arnold blockades Quebec—His Difficulties—Arrival of General Wooster—Of General Thomas—Abortive Attempt on Quebec—Preparations for Retreat—Sortie of Carleton—Retreat of the Americans—Halt at Point Deschambault—Alarm in the Colonies at the Retreat of the Army—Popular Clamor against Schuyler—Slanders Refuted

In a former chapter, we left Arnold before the walls of Quebec, wounded, crippled, almost disabled, yet not disheartened; blockading that "proud town" with a force inferior, by half, in number to that of the garrison. For his gallant services Congress promoted him in January to the rank of brigadier-general.

Throughout the winter he kept up the blockade with his shattered army; though had Carleton ventured upon a sortie he might have been forced to decamp. That cautious general, however, remained within his walls. He was sure of re-enforcements from England in the spring, and, in the meantime, trusted to the elements of dissolution at work in the besieging army.

Arnold, in truth, had difficulties of all kinds to contend with. His military chest was exhausted; his troops were in

want of necessaries; to procure supplies he was compelled to resort to the paper money issued by Congress, which was uncurrent among the Canadians; he issued a proclamation making the refusal to take it in payment a penal offense. This only produced irritation and disgust. As the terms of their enlistment expired, the men claimed their discharge and returned home. Sickness also thinned his ranks; so that, at one time, his force was reduced to five hundred men, and for two months, with all his recruitments of raw militia, did not exceed seven hundred.

The failure of the attack on Quebec had weakened the cause among the Canadians; the peasantry had been displeased by the conduct of the American troops; they had once welcomed them as deliverers; they now began to regard them as intruders. The seigneurs, or noblesse, also, feared to give further countenance to an invasion which, if defeated, might involve them in ruin.

Notwithstanding all these discouragements, Arnold still kept up a bold face; cut off supplies occasionally, and harassed the place with alarms. Having repaired his batteries, he opened a fire upon the town, but with little effect; the best part of the artillerists, with Lamb, their capable commander, were prisoners within the walls.

On the 1st day of April General Wooster arrived from Montreal with re-enforcements, and took the command. The day after his arrival Arnold, by the falling of his horse, again received an injury on the leg recently wounded, and was disabled for upward of a week. Considering himself slighted by General Wooster, who did not consult him in military affairs, he obtained leave of absence until he should be recovered from his lameness, and repaired to Montreal, where he took command.

General Thomas arrived at the camp in the course of April, and found the army in a forlorn condition, scattered at different posts and on the Island of Orleans. It was numerically increased to upward of two thousand men, but several hundred were unfit for service. The small-pox had made great ravages. They had inoculated each other. In their sick and debilitated state they were without barracks, and almost without medicine. A portion, whose term of enlistment had expired, refused to do duty, and clamored for their discharge.

The winter was over, the river was breaking up, re-enforcements to the garrison might immediately be expected, and then the case would be desperate. Observing that the river about Quebec was clear of ice, General Thomas determined on a bold effort. It was to send up a fire-ship with the flood, and, while the ships in the harbor were in flames and the town in confusion, to scale the walls.

Accordingly, on the 3d of May, the troops turned out with scaling ladders; the fire-ship came up the river under easy sail, and arrived near the shipping before it was discovered. It was fired into. The crew applied a slow-match to the train and pulled off. The ship was soon in a blaze, but the flames caught and consumed the sails; her way was checked, and she drifted harmlessly with the ebbing tide. The rest of the plan was of course abandoned.

Nothing now remained but to retreat before the enemy should be re-enforced. Preparations were made in all haste to embark the sick and the military stores. While this was taking place, five ships made their way into the harbor on the 6th of May and began to land troops. Thus re-enforced, General Carleton sallied forth, with eight hundred or a thousand men. We quote his own letter for an account of his

sortie. "As soon as part of the 29th regiment, with the marines, in all about two hundred, were landed, they, with the greatest part of the garrison, by this time much improved, and in high spirits, marched out of the ports of St. Louis and St. John's to see what these mighty boasters were about. They were found very busy in their preparations for a retreat. A few shots being exchanged, the line marched forward, and the place was soon clear of these plunderers."

By his own account, however, these "mighty boasters" had held him and his garrison closely invested for five months; had burned the suburbs; battered the walls; thrown red-hot shot among the shipping; made repeated and daring attempts to carry the place by assault and stratagem, and rendered it necessary for soldiers, sailors, marines, and even judges and other civil officers, to mount guard.* One officer declares, in a letter, that for eighty successive nights he slept in his clothes, to be ready in case of alarm.

All this, too, was effected by a handful of men, exposed in open encampments to the rigors of a Canadian winter. If in truth they were boasters, it must be allowed their deeds were equal to their words.

The Americans were in no condition to withstand Carleton's unlooked-for attack. They had no intrenchments, and could not muster three hundred men at any point. A precipitate retreat was the consequence, in which baggage, artillery, everything was abandoned. Even the sick were left behind; many of whom crawled away from the camp hospitals and took refuge in the woods, or among the Canadian peasantry.

General Carleton did not think it prudent to engage in

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* Carleton to Lord George Germaine, May 14.

a pursuit with his newly landed troops. He treated the prisoners with great humanity, and caused the sick to be sought out in their hiding-places, and brought to the general hospitals; with assurances that, when healed, they should have liberty to return to their homes.

General Thomas came to a halt at Point Deschambault, about sixty miles above Quebec, and called a council of war to consider what was to be done. The enemy's ships were hastening up the St. Lawrence; some were already but two or three leagues distant. The camp was without cannon; powder, forwarded by General Schuyler, had fallen into the enemy's hands; there were not provisions enough to subsist the army for more than two or three days; the men-of-war, too, might run up the river, intercept all their resources, and reduce them to the same extremity they had experienced before Quebec. It was resolved, therefore, to ascend the river still further.

General Thomas, however, determined to send forward the invalids, but to remain at Point Deschambault, with about five hundred men, until he should receive orders from Montreal, and learn whether such supplies could be forwarded immediately as would enable him to defend his position.*

The dispatches of General Thomas, setting forth the disastrous state of affairs, had a disheartening effect on Schuyler, who feared the army would be obliged to abandon Canada. Washington, on the contrary, spoke cheeringly on the subject. "We must not despair. A manly and spirited opposition only can insure success, and prevent the enemy from improving the advantage they have obtained." †

* General Thomas to Washington, May 8.
† Washington to Schuyler, May 17.

He regretted that the troops had not been able to make a stand at Point Deschambault, but hoped they would maintain a post as far down the river as possible. The lower it was the more important would be the advantages resulting from it, as all the country above would be favorable, and furnish assistance and support, while all below would necessarily be in the power of the enemy.

The tidings of the reverses in Canada and the retreat of the American army had spread consternation throughout the New Hampshire Grants and the New England frontiers, which would now be laid open to invasion. Committees of towns and districts assembled in various places to consult on the alarming state of affairs. In a time of adversity it relieves the public mind to have some individual on whom to charge its disasters. General Schuyler, at present, was to be the victim. We have already noticed the prejudice and ill will, on the part of the New England people, which had harassed him throughout the campaign, and nearly driven him from the service. His enemies now stigmatized him as the cause of the late reverses. He had neglected, they said, to forward re-enforcements and supplies to the army in Canada. His magnanimity in suffering Sir John Johnson to go at large while in his power was again misconstrued into a crime: he had thus enabled that dangerous man to renew his hostilities. Finally, it was insinuated that he was untrue to his country, if not positively leagued with her enemies.

These imputations were not generally advanced; and, when advanced, were not generally countenanced; but a committee of King's County appears to have given them credence, addressing a letter to the commander-in-chief on the subject, accompanied by documents.

Washington, to whom Schuyler's heart had been laid

open throughout all his trials, and who knew its rectitude, received the letter and documents with indignation and disgust, and sent copies of them to the general. "From these," said he, "you will readily discover the diabolical and insidious arts and schemes carrying on by the tories and friends of government to raise distrust, dissensions, and divisions among us. Having the utmost confidence in your integrity, and the most incontestable proof of your great attachment to our common country and its interests, I could not but look upon the charge against you with an eye of disbelief, and sentiments of detestation and abhorrence; nor should I have troubled you with the matter, had I not been informed that copies were sent to different committees, and to Governor Trumbull, which I conceived would get abroad, and that you, should you find I had been furnished with them, would consider my suppressing them as an evidence of my belief, or at best of my doubts, of the charges." *

We will go forward and give the sequel of the matter. While the imputations in question had merely floated in public rumor, Schuyler had taken no notice of them; "but it is now," writes he in reply to Washington, "a duty which I owe myself and my country to detect the scoundrels, and the only means of doing this is by requesting that an immediate inquiry be made into the matter; when I trust it will appear that it was more a scheme calculated to ruin me than to disunite and create jealousies in the friends of America. Your Excellency will, therefore, please to order a court of inquiry the soonest possible; for I cannot sit easy under such an infamous imputation; since, on this extensive continent, numbers of the most respectable characters may not know

* Washington to Schuyler, May 21.

what your Excellency and Congress do of my principles and exertions in the common cause."

He further adds: "I am informed by persons of good credit that about one hundred persons, living on what are commonly called the New Hampshire Grants, have had a design to seize me as a tory, and perhaps still have. There never was a man so infamously scandalized and ill-treated as I am."

We need only add that the Berkshire committees, which in a time of agitation and alarm had hastily given countenance to these imputations, investigated them deliberately in their cooler moments, and acknowledged, in a letter to Washington, that they were satisfied their suspicions respecting General Schuyler were wholly groundless. "We sincerely hope," added they, "his name may be handed down, with immortal honor, to the latest posterity, as one of the great pillars of the American cause."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Gates sent to Philadelphia with the Canada Dispatches—Promoted to the rank of Major-General—Washington summoned to Philadelphia—Putnam left in Command—Conference with Congress—Army Arrangements—A Board of War instituted—The Clintons of New York—Mrs. Washington Inoculated—Reed made Adjutant-General

As the reverses in Canada would affect the fortunes of the Revolution elsewhere, Washington sent General Gates to lay the dispatches concerning them before Congress. "His military experience," said he, "and intimate acquaintance with the situation of our affairs, will enable him to give Congress the fullest satisfaction about the measures neces-

sary to be adopted at this alarming crisis; and, with his zeal and attachment to the cause of America, he will have a claim to their notice and favors."

Scarce had Gates departed on his mission (May 19), when Washington himself received a summons to Philadelphia, to advise with Congress concerning the opening campaign. He was informed also that Gates, on the 16th of May, had been promoted to the rank of major-general, and Mifflin to that of brigadier-general, and a wish was intimated that they might take the command of Boston.

Washington prepared to proceed to Philadelphia. His general orders issued on the 19th of May, show the anxious situation of affairs at New York. In case of an alarm the respective regiments were to draw opposite to their encampments or quarters, until ordered to repair to the alarm posts. The alarm signals for regulars, militia, and the inhabitants of the city were, in the daytime—two cannon fired from the rampart at Fort George, and a flag hoisted on the top of Washington's headquarters. In the night—two cannon fired as above, and two lighted lanterns hoisted on the top of headquarters.*

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* The following statement of the batteries at New York we find dated May 22:

The Grand Battery, on the south part of the town.
Fort George, immediately above it.
White Hall Battery, on the left of the Grand Battery.
Oyster Battery, behind General Washington's headquarters.
Grenadier Battery, near the Brew House on the North River.
Jersey Battery, on the left of the Grenadier Battery.
Bayard's Hill Redoubt, on Bayard's Hill.
Spencer's Redoubt, on the hill where his brigade is encamped.
Waterbury's Battery (fascines), on a wharf below this hill.
Badlam's Redoubt, on a hill near the Jews' burying ground.

In his parting instructions to Putnam, who, as the oldest major-general in the city, would have the command during his absence, Washington informed him of the intention of the Provincial Congress of New York to seize the principal tories and disaffected persons in the city and the surrounding country, especially on Long Island, and authorized him to afford military aid, if required, to carry the same into execution. He was also to send Lord Stirling, Colonel Putnam the engineer, and Colonel Knox, if he could be spared, up to the Highlands, to examine the state of the forts and garrisons, and report what was necessary to put them in a posture of defense. The garrisons were chiefly composed of parts of a regiment of New York troops, commanded by Colonel James Clinton, of Ulster County, and were said to be sufficient.

The general, accompanied by Mrs. Washington, departed from New York on the 21st of May, and they were invited by Mr. Hancock, the President of Congress, to be his guests during their sojourn at Philadelphia.

Lee, when he heard of Washington's visit there, augured good effects from it. "I am extremely glad, dear general," writes he, "that you are in Philadelphia, for their councils sometimes lack a little of military electricity."

Washington, in his conferences with Congress, appears to have furnished this electricity. He roundly expressed his conviction that no accommodation could be effected with Great Britain on acceptable terms. Ministerialists had declared in Parliament that, the sword being drawn, the most coercive measures would be persevered in until there was complete submission. The recent subsidizing of foreign troops was a part of this policy, and indicated unsparing hostility. A protracted war, therefore, was inevitable; but

it would be impossible to carry it on successfully with the scanty force actually embodied, and with transient enlistments of militia.

In consequence of his representations, resolutions were passed in Congress that soldiers should be enlisted for three years, with a bounty of ten dollars for each recruit; that the army at New York should be re-enforced until the 1st of December with thirteen thousand eight hundred militia; that gondolas and fire-rafts should be built, to prevent the men-of-war and enemy's ships from coming into New York Bay, or the Narrows; and that a flying camp of ten thousand militia, furnished by Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland, and likewise engaged until the 1st December, should be stationed in the Jerseys for the defense of the Middle colonies. Washington was moreover empowered, in case of emergency, to call on the neighboring colonies for temporary aid with their militia.

Another result of his conferences with Congress was the establishment of a war office. Military affairs had hitherto been referred in Congress to committees casually appointed, and had consequently been subject to great irregularity and neglect. Henceforth a permanent committee, entitled the Board of War and Ordnance, was to take cognizance of them. The first board was composed of five members: John Adams, Colonel Benjamin Harrison, Roger Sherman, James Wilson, and Edward Rutledge; with Richard Peters as secretary. It went into operation on the 12th of June.

While at Philadelphia, Washington had frequent consultations with George Clinton, one of the delegates from New York, concerning the interior defenses of that province especially those connected with the security of the Highlands of the Hudson, where part of the regiment of Colonel James

Clinton, the brother of the delegate, was stationed. The important part which these brothers were soon to act in the military affairs of that province, and ultimately in its political history, entitles them to a special notice.

They were of the old Clinton stock of England; being descended from General James Clinton, an adherent of royalty in the time of the civil wars, but who passed over to Ireland after the death of Charles I. Their father, Charles Clinton, grandson of the general, emigrated to America in 1729, and settled in Ulster, now Orange County, just above the Highlands of the Hudson. Though not more than fifty miles from the city of New York, it was at that time on the borders of a wilderness, where every house had at times to be a fortress. Charles Clinton, like most men on our savage frontier in those days, was a warrior by necessity, if not by choice. He took an active part in Indian and French wars, commanded a provincial regiment stationed at Fort Herkimer, joined in the expedition under General Bradstreet, when it passed up the valley of the Mohawk, and was present at the capture of Fort Frontenac. His sons, James and George, one twenty, the other seventeen years of age, served in the same campaign, the one as captain, the other as lieutenant; thus taking an early lesson in that school of American soldiers, the French war.

James, whose propensities were always military, continued in the provincial army until the close of that war; and afterward, when settled on an estate in Ulster County, was able and active in organizing its militia. George applied himself to the law, and became successful at the bar in the same county. Their father, having laid aside the sword, occupied for many years, with discernment and integrity, the honorable station of Judge of the Court of Common

Pleas. He died in Ulster County, in 1773, in the eighty-third year of his age, "in full view of that revolution in which his sons were to act distinguished parts." With his latest breath he charged them "to stand by the liberties of their country."

They needed no such admonition. From the very first they had been heart and hand in the cause. George had championed it for years in the New York Legislature, signalizing himself by his zeal as one of an intrepid minority in opposing ministerial oppression. He had but recently taken his seat as delegate to the Continental Congress.

James Clinton, appointed colonel on the 30th of June, 1775, had served with his regiment of New York troops under Montgomery at the siege of St. John's and the capture of Montreal, after which he had returned home. He had subsequently been appointed to the command of a regiment in one of the four battalions raised for the defense of New York. We shall soon have occasion to speak further of these patriot brothers.

The prevalence of smallpox had frequently rendered Washington uneasy on Mrs. Washington's account during her visits to the army; he was relieved, therefore, by her submitting to inoculation during their sojourn in Philadelphia, and having a very favorable time.

He was gratified, also, by procuring the appointment of his late secretary, Joseph Reed, to the post of adjutant-general, vacated by the promotion of General Gates, thus placing him once more by his side.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Affairs in Canada—Disaster at the Cedars—Hostile Designs of the Johnsons—A Bloody Summer expected—Forts in the Highlands—Colonel James Clinton in Command—Fortifications at King's Bridge and on Long Island

DISPATCHES from Canada continued to be disastrous. General Arnold, who was in command at Montreal, had established a post on the St. Lawrence, about forty miles above that place, on a point of land called the Cedars; where he had stationed Colonel Bedel with about four hundred men to prevent goods being sent to the enemy in the upper country, and to guard against surprise from them or their Indians.

In the latter part of May, Colonel Bedel received intelligence that a large body of British, Canadians, and Indians, under the command of Captain Forster, were coming down from Oswegatchie to attack him. Leaving Major Butterfield in command of the post, he hastened down to Montreal to obtain re-enforcements. Arnold immediately detached one hundred men, under Major Shelburne, and prepared to follow in person, with a much greater force. In the meantime, the post at the Cedars had been besieged, and Major Butterfield intimidated into a surrender, by a threat from Captain Forster that resistance would provoke a massacre of his whole garrison by the Indians. The re-enforcements under Major Shelburne were assailed within four miles of the Cedars by a large party of savages, and captured, after a sharp skirmish, in which several were killed on both sides.

Arnold received word of these disasters while on the

march. He instantly sent forward some Caughnawaga Indians to overtake the savages and demand a surrender of the prisoners; with a threat that, in case of a refusal, and that any of them were murdered, he would sacrifice every Indian who fell into his hands, and would follow the offenders to their towns, and destroy them by fire and sword. He now embarked four hundred of his men in bateaux, and pushed on with the remainder by land. Arriving at St. Anne's, above the rapids of the St. Lawrence, he discovered several of the enemy's bateaux taking the prisoners off from the island, a league distant. It was a tormenting sight, as it was not in his power to relieve them. His bateaux were a league behind, coming up the rapids very slowly. He sent several expresses to hurry them. It was sunset before they arrived, and he could embark all his people; in the meantime, his Caughnawaga messengers returned with an answer from the savages. They had five hundred prisoners collected together, they said, at Quinze Chiens, where they were posted; should he offer to land and attack them, they would kill every prisoner, and give no quarter to any who should fall into their hands thereafter.

"Words cannot express my feelings," writes Arnold, "at the delivery of this message. Torn by the conflicting passions of revenge and humanity; a sufficient force to take ample revenge, raging for action, urged me on one hand; and humanity for five hundred unhappy wretches, who were on the point of being sacrificed, if our vengeance was not delayed, pleaded equally strong on the other." In this situation, he ordered the boats to row immediately for the island whither he had seen the enemy taking their prisoners. Before he reached it, the savages had conveyed them all away, excepting five, whom he found naked, and almost starved,

and one or two, whom, being unwell, they had butchered. Arnold now pushed for Quinze Chiens, about four miles distant, on the mainland. Here was the whole force of the enemy, civilized and savage, intrenched and fortified.

As Arnold approached, they opened a fire upon his boats, with small arms and two brass six-pounders. He rowed near the land, without returning a shot. By this time it was too dark to distinguish anything on shore, and being unacquainted with the ground, he judged it prudent to return to St. John's.

Here he called a council of war, and it was determined to attack the enemy early in the morning. In the course of the night a flag was sent by Captain Forster, with articles for an exchange of prisoners, which had been entered into by him and Major Shelburne. As the terms were not equal, they were objected to by Arnold, and a day passed before they were adjusted. A cartel was then signed, by which the prisoners, consisting of two majors, nine captains, twenty subalterns, and four hundred and forty-three privates, were to be exchanged for an equal number of British prisoners of the same rank, and were to be sent to the south shore of the St. Lawrence, near Caughnawaga, whence to return to their homes. Nine days were allowed for the delivery of the prisoners, during which time hostilities should be suspended.

Arnold, in a letter to the commissioners of Congress then at Montreal, giving an account of this arrangement, expressed his indignation at the conduct of the king's officers in employing savages to screen their butcheries, and suffering their prisoners to be killed in cold blood. "I intend being with you this evening," added he, "to consult on some effectual measures to take with these savages, and still more

savage British troops, who are still at Quinze Chiens. As soon as our prisoners are released, I hope it will be in our power to take ample vengeance, or nobly fall in the attempt." *

The accounts which reached Washington of these affairs were vague and imperfect, and kept him for some days in painful suspense. The disasters at the Cedars were attributed entirely to the base and cowardly conduct of Bedel and Butterfield, and he wrote to Schuyler to have good courts appointed and bring them, and every other officer guilty of misconduct, to trial.

"The situation of our affairs in Canada," observes he, "is truly alarming. I sincerely wish the next letters from the northward may not contain the melancholy advices of General Arnold's defeat, and the loss of Montreal. The most vigorous exertions will be necessary to retrieve our circumstances there, and I hope you will strain every nerve for that purpose. Unless it can be done now, Canada will be lost to us forever."

While his mind was agitated by these concerns, letters from Schuyler showed that mischief was brewing in another quarter.

Colonel Guy Johnson, accompanied by the Sachem Brant and the Butlers, had been holding councils with the Indians, and designed, it was said, to come back to the Mohawk country at the head of a British and savage force. A correspondence was carried on between him and his cousin, Sir John Johnson, who was said to be preparing to co-operate with his Scotch dependents and Indian allies.

Considering this a breach of Sir John's parole, Schuyler

* Arnold to the Commis. of Cong., 27th May.

had sent Colonel Elias Dayton with a force to apprehend him. Sir John, with a number of his armed tenants, retreated for refuge among the Indians, on the borders of the lakes. Dayton took temporary possession of Johnson Hall, placed guards about it, seized upon Sir John's papers, and read them in the presence of Lady Johnson, and subsequently conveyed her ladyship as a kind of hostage to Albany.

Shortly afterward came further intelligence of the designs of the Johnsons. Sir John, with his Scotch warriors and Indian allies, was said to be actually coming down the valley of the Mohawk, bent on revenge, and preparing to lay everything waste; and Schuyler collecting a force at Albany to oppose him. Washington instantly wrote to Schuyler to detach Colonel Dayton with his regiment on that service, with instructions to secure a post where Fort Stanwix formerly stood in the time of the French war. As to Schuyler himself, Washington, on his own responsibility, directed him to hold a conference with the Six Nations, and with any others whom he and his brother commissioners on Indian affairs might think necessary, and secure their active services, without waiting further directions from Congress; that body having recently resolved to employ Indian allies in the war, the enemy having set the example.

"We expect a bloody summer in New York and Canada," writes Washington to his brother Augustine, "and I am sorry to say that we are not, either in men or arms, prepared for it. However, it is to be hoped that, if our cause is just, as I most religiously believe, the same Providence which has, in many instances, appeared for us, will still go on to afford its aid."

Lord Stirling, who, by Washington's orders, had visited

and inspected the defenses in the Highlands, rendered a report of their condition, of which we give the purport. Fort Montgomery, at the lower part of the Highlands, was on the west bank of the river, north of Dunderberg (or Thunder Hill). It was situated on a bank one hundred feet high. The river at that place was about half a mile wide. Opposite the fort was the promontory of Antony's Nose, many hundred feet high, accessible only to goats, or men expert in climbing. A body of riflemen stationed here might command the decks of vessels. Fort Montgomery appeared to Lord Stirling a proper place for a guard post.

Fort Constitution was about six miles higher up the river, on a rocky island of the same name at a narrow strait where the Hudson, shouldered by precipices, makes a sudden bend round West Point. A redoubt, in the opinion of Lord Stirling, would be needed on the point, not only for the preservation of Fort Constitution, but for its own importance.

The garrison of that fort consisted of two companies of Colonel James Clinton's regiment and Captain Wisner's company of minute men, in all one hundred and sixty rank and file. Fort Montgomery was garrisoned by three companies of the same regiment, about two hundred rank and file. Both garrisons were miserably armed. The direction of the works of both forts was in the hands of commissioners appointed by the Provincial Congress of New York. The general command of the posts required to be adjusted. Several persons accused of being "notorious tories" had recently been sent into Fort Montgomery by the district committees of the counties of Albany, Dutchess, and Westchester, with directions to the commanding officers to keep them at hard labor until their further order. They were employed upon the fortifications.

In view of all these circumstances, Washington, on the 14th of June, ordered Colonel James Clinton to take command of both posts, and of all the troops stationed at them. He seemed a fit custodian for them, having been a soldier from his youth; brought up on a frontier subject to Indian alarms and incursions, and acquainted with the strong points and fastnesses of the Highlands.

King's Bridge and the heights adjacent, considered by General Lee of the utmost importance to the communication between New York and the mainland, and to the security of the Hudson, were reconnoitered by Washington on horseback about the middle of the month; ordering where works should be laid out. Breastworks were to be thrown up for the defense of the bridge, and an advanced work (subsequently called Fort Independence) was to be built beyond it, on a hill commanding Spyt den Duivel Creek, as that inlet of the Hudson is called which links it with the Harlaem River.

A strong work, intended as a kind of citadel, was to crown a rocky height between two and three miles south of the bridge, commanding the channel of the Hudson; and below it were to be redoubts on the banks of the river at Jeffrey's Point. In honor of the general, the citadel received the name of Fort Washington.

Colonel Rufus Putnam was the principal engineer who had the direction of the works. General Mifflin encamped in their vicinity with part of the two battalions from Pennsylvania to be employed in their construction, aided by the militia.

While these preparations were made for the protection of the Hudson, the works about Brooklyn, on Long Island, were carried on with great activity, under the superintend-

ence of General Greene. In a word, the utmost exertions were made at every point to put the city, its environs, and the Hudson River, in a state of defense before the arrival of another hostile armament.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Retreat of General Thomas—His Death—General Sullivan in Command—Scene on the Sorel—Sanguine Expectations of Sullivan—Washington's Opinion of Sullivan's Character—Gates appointed to the Command in Canada—Re-enforcements of the Enemy—Reverses—Thompson Captured—Retreat of Sullivan—Close of the Invasion of Canada

OPERATIONS in Canada were drawing to a disastrous close. General Thomas, finding it impossible to make a stand at Point Deschambault, had continued his retreat to the mouth of the Sorel, where he found General Thompson with part of the troops detached by Washington from New York, who were making some preparations for defense. Shortly after his arrival he was taken ill with smallpox, and removed to Chamblee. He had prohibited inoculation among his troops, because it put too many of their scanty number on the sick list; he probably fell a victim to his own prohibition, as he died of that malady on the 2d of June.

On his death, General Sullivan, who had recently arrived with the main detachment of troops from New York, succeeded to the command; General Wooster having been recalled. He advanced immediately with his brigade to the mouth of the Sorel, where he found General Thompson, with but very few troops to defend that post, having detached Colonel St. Clair, with six or seven hundred men, to Three Rivers, about fifty miles down the St. Lawrence, to give

check to an advanced corps of the enemy, of about eight hundred regulars and Canadians, under the veteran Scot, Colonel Maclean. In the meantime, General Thompson, who was left with but two hundred men to defend his post, was sending off his sick and his heavy baggage to be prepared for a retreat, if necessary. "It really was affecting," writes Sullivan to Washington, "to see the banks of the Sorel lined with men, women, and children, leaping, and clapping their hands for joy to see me arrive; it gave no less joy to General Thompson, who seemed to be wholly forsaken, and left to fight against an unequal force, or retreat before them."

Sullivan proceeded forthwith to complete the works on the Sorel; in the meantime he detached General Thompson with additional troops to overtake St. Clair, and assume command of the whole party, which would then amount to two thousand men. He was by no means to attack the encampment at Three Rivers, unless there was great prospect of success, as his defeat might prove the total loss of Canada. "I have the highest opinion of the bravery and resolution of the troops you command," says Sullivan in his instructions, "and doubt not but, under the direction of a kind Providence, you will open the way for our recovering that ground which former troops have so shamefully lost."

Sullivan's letter to Washington, written at the same time, is full of sanguine anticipation. It was his fixed determination to gain post at Deschambault, and fortify it, so as to make it inaccessible. "The enemy's ships are now above that place," writes he; "but if General Thompson succeeds at Three Rivers, I will soon remove the ships below Richelieu Falls, and, after that, approach Quebec as fast as possible."

"Our affairs here," adds he, "have taken a strange turn since our arrival. The Canadians are flocking by hundreds

to take a part with us. The only reason of their disaffection was because our exertions were so feeble that they doubted much of our success, and even of our ability to protect them.

"I venture to assure you and the Congress that I can in a few days reduce the army to order, and, with the assistance of a kind Providence, put a new face to our affairs here, which a few days since seemed almost impossible."

The letter of Sullivan gave Washington an unexpected gleam of sunshine. "Before it came to hand," writes he in reply, "I almost dreaded to hear from Canada, as my advices seemed to promise nothing favorable, but rather further misfortunes. But I now hope that our affairs, from the confused, distracted, and almost forlorn state in which you found them, will change, and assume an aspect of order and success." Still his sagacious mind perceived a motive for this favorable coloring of affairs. Sullivan was aiming at the command in Canada; and Washington soberly weighed his merits for the appointment, in a letter to the President of Congress. "He is active, spirited, and zealously attached to the cause. He has his wants, and he has his foibles. The latter are manifested in his little tincture of vanity, and in an overdesire of being popular, which now and then lead him into embarrassments. His wants are common to us all. He wants experience to move upon a grand scale; for the limited and contracted knowledge which any of us have in military matters stands in very little stead." This want was overbalanced, on the part of General Sullivan, by sound judgment, some acquaintance with men and books, and an enterprising genius.

"As the security of Canada is of the last importance to the well-being of these colonies," adds Washington, "I should like to know the sentiments of Congress respecting the nomi-

nation of any officer to that command. The character I have drawn of General Sullivan is just, according to my ideas of him. Congress will therefore determine upon the propriety of continuing him in Canada, or sending another, as they shall see fit." *

Scarce had Washington dispatched this letter, when he received one from the President of Congress, dated the 18th of June, informing him that Major-general Gates had been appointed to command the forces in Canada, and requesting him to expedite his departure as soon as possible. The appointment of Gates has been attributed to the influence of the Eastern delegates, with whom he was a favorite; indeed, during his station at Boston he had been highly successful in cultivating the good graces of the New England people. He departed for his command on the 26th of June, vested with extraordinary powers for the regulation of affairs in that "distant, dangerous, and shifting scene." "I would fain hope," writes Washington, "his arrival there will give our affairs a complexion different from what they have worn for a long time past, and that many essential benefits will result from it."

Dispatches just received from General Sullivan had given a different picture of affairs in Canada from that contained in his previous letter. In fact, when he wrote that letter, he was ignorant of the actual force of the enemy in Canada, which had recently been augmented to about thirteen thousand men; several regiments having arrived from Ireland, one from England, another from General Howe, and a body of Brunswick troops under the Baron Riedesel. Of these, the greater part were on the way up from Quebec in divi-

* Washington to the President of Congress, July 12, 1776.

sions, by land and water, with Generals Carleton, Burgoyne, Philips, and Riedesel; while a considerable number under General Fraser had arrived at Three Rivers, and others, under General Nesbit, lay near them on board of transports.

Sullivan's dispatch, dated on the 8th of June, at the mouth of the Sorel, began in his former sanguine vein, anticipating the success of General Thompson's expedition to Three Rivers. "He has proceeded in the manner proposed, and made his attack at daylight, for at that time a very heavy cannonading began, which lasted with some intervals to twelve o'clock. It is now near 1 P.M.; the firing has ceased, except some irregular firing with cannon, at a considerable distance of time one from the other. At eight o'clock a very heavy firing of small-arms was heard even here, at the distance of forty-five miles. I am almost certain that victory has declared in our favor, as the irregular firing of the cannon for such a length of time after the small-arms ceased shows that our men are in possession of the ground."

The letter was kept open to give the particulars of this supposed victory; it closed with a dismal reverse. General Thompson had coasted in bateaux along the right bank of the river at the expanse called Lake St. Pierre, and arrived at Nicolete, where he found St. Clair and his detachment. He crossed the river in the night, and landed a few miles above Three Rivers, intending to surprise the enemy before daylight; he was not aware at the time that additional troops had arrived under General Burgoyne.

After landing, he marched with rapidity toward Three Rivers, but was led by treacherous guides into a morass and obliged to return back nearly two miles. Day broke, and he was discovered from the ships. A cannonade was opened upon his men as they made their way slowly for an hour and

a half through a swamp. At length they arrived in sight of Three Rivers, but it was to find a large force drawn up in battle array, under General Fraser, by whom they were warmly attacked, and after a brief stand thrown into confusion. Thompson attempted to rally his troops, and partly succeeded, until a fire was opened upon them in rear by Nesbit, who had landed from his ships. Their rout now was complete. General Thompson, Colonel Irvine, and about two hundred men were captured, twenty-five were slain, and the rest pursued for several miles through a deep swamp. After great fatigues and sufferings, they were able to get on board of their boats, which had been kept from falling into the hands of the enemy. In these they made their way back to the Sorel, bringing General Sullivan a sad explanation of all the firing he had heard, and the alarming intelligence of the overpowering force that was coming up the river.

"This, my dear general," writes Sullivan, in the conclusion of his letter, "is the state of this unfortunate enterprise. What you will next hear I cannot say. I am every moment informed of the vast number of the enemy which have arrived. I have only two thousand five hundred and thirty-three rank and file. Most of the officers seem discouraged, and, of course, their men. I am employed day and night in fortifying and securing my camp, and am determined to hold it as long as a person will stick by me."

He had, indeed, made the desperate resolve to defend the mouth of the Sorel, but was induced to abandon it by the unanimous opinion of his officers and the evident unwillingness of his troops. Dismantling his batteries, therefore, he retreated with his artillery and stores, just before the arrival of the enemy, and was followed, step by step along the Sorel, by a strong column under General Burgoyne.

On the 18th of June he was joined by General Arnold with three hundred men, the garrison of Montreal, who had crossed at Longueil just in time to escape a large detachment of the enemy. Thus re-enforced, and the evacuation of Canada being determined on in a council of war, Sullivan succeeded in destroying everything at Chamblee and St. John's that he could not carry away, breaking down bridges, and leaving forts and vessels in flames, and continued his retreat to the Isle aux Noix, where he made a halt for some days until he should receive positive orders from Washington or General Schuyler. In a letter to Washington, he observes, "I am extremely sorry it was not in my power to fulfill your Excellency's wishes by leading on our troops to victory." After stating the reason of his failure, he adds, "I think we shall secure all the public stores and baggage of the army, and secure our retreat with very little loss. Whether we shall have well men enough to carry them on, I much doubt, if we don't remove quickly; unless Heaven is pleased to restore health to this wretched army, now, perhaps, the most pitiful one that ever was formed."

The low, unhealthy situation of the Isle aux Noix obliged him soon to remove his camp to the Isle la Motte, whence, on receiving orders to that effect from General Schuyler, he ultimately embarked with his forces, sick and well, for Crown Point.

Thus ended this famous invasion; an enterprise bold in its conceptions, daring and hardy in its execution; full of ingenious expedients and hazardous exploits; and which, had not unforeseen circumstances counteracted its well-devised plans, might have added all Canada to the American confederacy.

sought refuge in woods and morasses. Washington directed that those arrested, who belonged to the army, should be tried by a court-martial, and the rest handed over to the secular power.

According to statements made before the committee, five guineas bounty was offered by Governor Tryon to each man who should enter the king's service; with a promise of two hundred acres of land for himself, one hundred for his wife, and fifty for each child. The men thus recruited were to act on shore, in co-operation with the king's troops when they came.

Corbie's tavern, near Washington's quarters, was a kind of rendezvous of the conspirators. There one Gilbert Forbes, a gunsmith, "a short, thick man, with a white coat," enlisted men, gave them money, and "swore them on the book to secrecy." From this house a correspondence was kept up with Governor Tryon on shipboard, through a "mulatto-colored negro, dressed in blue clothes." At this tavern it was supposed Washington's bodyguards were tampered with. Thomas Hickey, one of the guards, a dark-complexioned man, five feet six inches high, and well-set, was said not only to be enlisted, but to have aided in corrupting his comrades; among others, Greene the drummer, and Johnson the fifer.

It was further testified before the committee that one Sergeant Graham, an old soldier, formerly of the royal artillery, had been employed by Governor Tryon to prowl round and survey the grounds and works about the city and on Long Island, and that, on information thus procured, a plan of operations had been concerted. On the arrival of the fleet, a man-of-war should cannonade the battery at Red Hook; while that was doing, a detachment of the army

ALEXANDER HAMILTON.

Irving, Vol. Thirteen, p. 115.

should land below with cannon, and by a circuitous march surprise and storm the works on Long Island. The shipping then, with the remainder of the army, were to divide, one part to run up the Hudson, and the other up the East River; troops were to land above New York, secure the pass at King's Bridge, and cut off all communication between the city and country. *

Much of the evidence given was of a dubious kind. It was certain that persons had secretly been enlisted, and sworn to hostile operations, but Washington did not think that any regular plan had been digested by the conspirators. "The matter," writes he, "I am in hopes, by a timely discovery, will be suppressed." †

According to the mayor's own admission before the committee, he had been cognizant of attempts to enlist tories and corrupt Washington's guards, though he declared that he had discountenanced them. He had on one occasion, also, at the request of Governor Tryon, paid money for him to Gilbert Forbes, the gunsmith, for rifles and round-bored guns, which he had already furnished, and for others which he was to make. He had done so, however (according to his account), with great reluctance, and after much hesitation and delay, warning the gunsmith that he would be hanged if found out. The mayor, with a number of others, were detained in prison to await a trial.

Thomas Hickey, the individual of Washington's guard, was tried before a court-martial. He was an Irishman, and had been a deserter from the British army. The court-martial found him guilty of mutiny and sedition, and treach-

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* Am. Archives, 5th Series, vi. 1177.
† Washington to the President of Congress, June 28.

erous correspondence with the enemy, and sentenced him to be hanged.

The sentence was approved by Washington, and was carried promptly into effect, in the most solemn and impressive manner, to serve as a warning and example in this time of treachery and danger. On the morning of the 28th, all the officers and men off duty, belonging to the brigades of Heath, Spencer, Stirling, and Scott, assembled under arms at their respective parades at ten o'clock, and marched thence to the ground. Twenty men from each brigade, with bayonets fixed, guarded the prisoner to the place of execution, which was a field near the Bowery Lane. There he was hanged in the presence, we are told, of near twenty thousand persons.

While the city was still brooding over this doleful spectacle, four ships of war, portentous visitants, appeared off the Hook, stood quietly in at the Narrows, and dropped anchor in the bay.

In his orderly book, Washington expressed a hope that the unhappy fate of Thomas Hickey, executed that day for mutiny, sedition, and treachery, would be a warning to every soldier in the line to avoid the crimes for which he suffered.*

* As a specimen of the reports which circulated throughout the country concerning this conspiracy, we give an extract from a letter, written from Wethersfield, in Connecticut, 9th of July, 1776, by the Reverend John Marsh.

"You have heard of the infernal plot that has been discovered. About ten days before any of the conspirators were taken up, a woman went to the general and desired a private audience. He granted it to her, and she let him know that his life was in danger, and gave him such an account of the conspiracy as gained his confidence. He opened the matter to a few friends, on whom he could depend. A strict watch was kept night and day, until a favorable opportunity occurred; when the general went to bed

On the 29th of June an express from the lookout on Staten Island announced that forty sail were in sight. They were, in fact, ships from Halifax, bringing between nine and ten thousand of the troops recently expelled from Boston, together with six transports filled with Highland troops, which had joined the fleet at sea. At sight of this formidable armament standing into the harbor, Washington instantly sent notice of its arrival to Colonel James Clinton, who had command of the post in the Highlands, and urged all possible preparations to give the enemy a warm reception should they push their frigates up the river.

According to general orders issued from headquarters on the following day (June 30), the officers and men not on duty were to march from their respective regimental parades to their alarm posts, at least once every day, that they might become well acquainted with them. They were to go by routes least exposed to a fire from the shipping, and all the

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as usual, arose about two o'clock, told his lady he was a-going, with some of the Provincial Congress, to order some tories seized—desired she would make herself easy, and go to sleep. He went off without any of his aides-de-camp, except the captain of his life-guard, was joined by a number of chosen men, with lanterns and proper instruments to break open houses, and before six o'clock next morning had forty men under guard at the City Hall, among whom was the mayor of the city, several merchants, and five or six of his own life-guard. Upon examination, one Forbes confessed that the plan was to assassinate the general, and as many of the superior officers as they could, and to blow up the magazine upon the appearance of the enemy's fleet, and to go off in boats prepared for that purpose to join the enemy. Thomas Hickey, who has been executed, went from this place. He came from Ireland a few years ago. What will be done with the mayor is uncertain. He can't be tried by court-martial, and, it is said, there is no law of that colony by which he can be condemned. May he have his deserts."

officers, from the highest to the lowest, were to make themselves well acquainted with the grounds. Upon a signal of the enemy's approach, or upon any alarm, all fatigue parties were immediately to repair to their respective corps with their arms, ammunition and accouterments, ready for instant action.

It was ascertained that the ramifications of the conspiracy lately detected extended up the Hudson. Many of the disaffected in the upper counties were enlisted in it. The committee of safety at Cornwall, in Orange County, sent word to Colonel James Clinton, Fort Constitution, of the mischief that was brewing. James Haff, a tory, had confessed before them that he was one of a number who were to join the British troops as soon as they should arrive. It was expected the latter would push up the river and land at Verplanck's Point; whereupon the guns at the forts in the Highlands were to be spiked by soldiers of their own garrisons; and the tories throughout the country were to be up in arms.*

Clinton received letters, also, from a meeting of committees in the precincts of Newburg, apprising him that persons dangerous to the cause were lurking in that neighborhood, and requesting him to detach twenty-five men under a certain lieutenant acquainted with the woods, "to aid in getting some of these rascals apprehended and secured."

While city and country were thus agitated by apprehensions of danger, internal and external, other arrivals swelled the number of ships in the bay of New York to one hundred and thirty, men-of-war and transports. They made no

* Extracts from minutes of the committee, American Archives, 4th Series, vi. 1112.

movement to ascend the Hudson, but anchored off Staten Island, where they landed their troops, and the hillsides were soon whitened with their tents.

In the frigate "Greyhound," one of the four ships which first arrived, came General Howe. He had preceded the fleet, in order to confer with Governor Tryon, and inform himself of the state of affairs. In a letter to his government he writes: "I met with Governor Tryon on board of a ship at the Hook, and many gentlemen, fast friends of government, attending him, from whom I have the fullest information of the state of the rebels. . . . We passed the Narrows with three ships of war, and the first division of transports, landed the grenadiers and light infantry, as the ships came up, on this island, to the great joy of a most loyal people, long suffering on that account under the oppression of the rebels stationed among them; who precipitately fled on the approach of the shipping. . . . There is great reason to expect a numerous body of the inhabitants to join the army from the province of York, the Jerseys, and Connecticut, who, in this time of universal oppression, only wait for opportunities to give proofs of their loyalty and zeal." *

Washington beheld the gathering storm with an anxious

* Governor Tryon, in a letter dated about this time from on board of the "Duchess of Gordon," off Staten Island, writes: "The testimony given by the inhabitants of the island, of loyalty to his majesty, and attachment to his government, I flatter myself will be general throughout the province as soon as the army gets the main body of the rebels between them and the sea; which will leave all the back country open to the command of the king's friends, and yield a plentiful resource of provisions for the army, and place them in a better situation to cut off the rebels' retreat when forced from their stronghold."—Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 122.

eye, aware that General Howe only awaited the arrival of his brother, the admiral, to commence hostile operations. He wrote to the President of Congress, urging a call on the Massachusetts government for its quota of Continental troops; and the formation of a flying camp of ten thousand men, to be stationed in the Jerseys, as a central force, ready to act in any direction as circumstances might require.

On the 2d of July, he issued a general order, calling upon the troops to prepare for a momentous conflict which was to decide their liberties and fortunes. Those who should signalize themselves by acts of bravery would be noticed and rewarded; those who proved craven would be exposed and punished. No favor would be shown to such as refused or neglected to do their duty at so important a crisis.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

First Appearance of Alexander Hamilton—His Early Days—General Hugh Mercer in command of the Flying Camp—Declaration of Independence—Announced to the Army—Downfall of the King's Statue

About this time we have the first appearance in the military ranks of the Revolution of one destined to take an active and distinguished part in public affairs; and to leave the impress of his genius on the institutions of the country.

As General Greene one day, on his way to Washington's headquarters, was passing through a field—then on the outskirts of the city, now in the heart of its busiest quarter, and known as "the Park"—he paused to notice a provincial company of artillery, and was struck with its able performances, and with the tact and talent of its commander. He was a mere youth, apparently about twenty years of age;

small in person and stature, but remarkable for his alert and manly bearing. It was Alexander Hamilton.

Greene was an able tactician, and quick to appreciate any display of military science; a little conversation sufficed to convince him that the youth before him had a mind of no ordinary grasp and quickness. He invited him to his quarters, and from that time cultivated his friendship.

Hamilton was a native of the island of Nevis, in the West Indies, and at a very early age had been put in a counting-house at Santa Cruz. His nature, however, was aspiring. "I contemn the groveling condition of a clerk to which my fortune condemns me," writes he to a youthful friend, "and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. . . . I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I am no philosopher, and may be justly said to build castles in the air; yet we have seen such schemes succeed, when the projector is constant. I shall conclude by saying, I wish there was a war."

Still he applied himself with zeal and fidelity to the duties of his station, and such were the precocity of his judgment and his aptness at accounts that, before he was fourteen years of age, he was left for a brief interval, during the absence of the principal, at the head of the establishment. While his situation in the house gave him a practical knowledge of business and experience in finance, his leisure hours were devoted to self-cultivation. He made himself acquainted with mathematics and chemistry, and indulged a strong propensity to literature. Some early achievements of his pen attracted attention and showed such proof of talent that it was determined to give him the advantage of a regular education. He was accordingly sent to Elizabethtown, in the Jerseys, in the autumn of 1772, to prepare, by a course of

studies, for admission into King's (now Columbia) College, at New York. He entered the college as a private student in the latter part of 1773, and endeavored, by diligent application, to fit himself for the medical profession.

The contentions of the colonies with the mother country gave a different direction and impulse to his ardent and aspiring mind. He soon signalized himself by the exercise of his pen, sometimes in a grave, sometimes in a satirical manner. On the 6th of July, 1774, there was a general meeting of the citizens in the "Fields," to express their abhorrence of the Boston Port Bill. Hamilton was present, and, prompted by his excited feelings and the instigation of youthful companions, ventured to address the multitude. The vigor and maturity of his intellect, contrasted with his youthful appearance, won the admiration of his auditors; even his diminutive size gave additional effect to his eloquence.

The war, for which in his boyish days he had sighed, was approaching. He now devoted himself to military studies, especially pyrotechnics and gunnery, and formed an amateur corps out of a number of his fellow-students and the young gentlemen of the city. In the month of March, 1776, he became captain of artillery in a provincial corps, newly raised, and soon, by able drilling, rendered it conspicuous for discipline.

It was while exercising his artillery company that he attracted, as we have mentioned, the attention of General Greene. Further acquaintance heightened the general's opinion of his extraordinary merits, and he took an early occasion to introduce him to the commander-in-chief, by whom we shall soon find him properly appreciated.

A valuable accession to the army, at this anxious time, was Washington's neighbor and former companion in arms,

Hugh Mercer, the veteran of Culloden and Fort Duquesne. His military spirit was alert as ever; the talent he had shown in organizing the Virginia militia, and his zeal and efficiency as a member of the committee of safety, had been properly appreciated by Congress, and on the 5th of June he had received the commission of brigadier-general. He was greeted by Washington with the right hand of fellowship. The flying camp was about forming. The committee of safety of Pennsylvania were forwarding some of the militia of that province to the Jerseys, to perform the service of the camp until the militia levies, specified by Congress, should arrive. Washington had the nomination of some Continental officer to the command. He gave it to Mercer, of whose merits he felt sure, and sent him over to Paulus Hook, in the Jerseys, to make arrangements for the Pennsylvania militia as they should come in; recommending him to Brigadier-general William Livingston as an officer on whose experience and judgment great confidence might be reposed.

Livingston was a man inexperienced in arms, but of education, talent, sagacity, and ready wit. He was of the New York family of the same name, but had resided for some time in the Jerseys, having a spacious mansion in Elizabethtown, which he had named Liberty Hall. Mercer and he were to consult together, and concert plans to repel invasions; the New Jersey militia, however, were distinct from the flying camp, and only called out for local defense. New Jersey's greatest danger of invasion was from Staten Island, where the British were throwing up works, and whence they might attempt to cross to Amboy. The flying camp was therefore to be stationed in the neighborhood of that place.

"The known disaffection of the people of Amboy," writes Washington, "and the treachery of those on Staten Island,

who, after the fairest professions, have shown themselves our most inveterate enemies, have induced me to give directions that all persons of known enmity and doubtful character should be removed from those places."

According to General Livingston's humorous account, his own village of Elizabethtown was not much more reliable, being peopled in those agitated times by "unknown, unrecommended strangers, guilty-looking tories, and very knavish whigs."

While danger was gathering round New York, and its inhabitants were in mute suspense and fearful anticipations, the General Congress at Philadelphia was discussing, with closed doors, what John Adams pronounced—"The greatest question ever debated in America, and as great as ever was or will be debated among men." The result was a resolution passed unanimously, on the 2d of July, "that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

"The 2d of July," adds the same patriotic statesman, "will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forth for evermore."

The glorious event has, indeed, given rise to an annual jubilee, but not on the day designated by Adams. The Fourth of July is the day of national rejoicing, for on that day the "Declaration of Independence," that solemn and

sublime document, was adopted. Tradition gives a dramatic effect to its announcement. It was known to be under discussion, but the closed doors of Congress excluded the populace. They awaited, in throngs, an appointed signal. In the steeple of the state house was a bell, imported twenty-three years previously from London, by the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania. It bore the portentous text from Scripture: "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." A joyous peal from that bell gave notice that the bill had been passed. It was the knell of British domination.

No one felt the importance of the event more deeply than John Adams, for no one had been more active in producing it. We quote his words written at the moment: "When I look back to the year 1761, and recollect the argument concerning writs of assistance in the superior court, which I have hitherto considered as the commencement of the controversy between Great Britain and America, and run though the whole period from that time to this, and recollect the series of political events, the chain of causes and effects; I am surprised at the suddenness, as well as the greatness of this Revolution; Great Britain has been filled with folly, America with wisdom."

His only regret was that the declaration of independence had not been made sooner. "Had it been made seven months ago," said he, "we should have mastered Quebec, and been in possession of Canada, and might before this hour have formed alliances with foreign states. Many gentlemen in high stations and of great influence have been duped by the ministerial bubble of commissioners to treat, and have been slow and languid in promoting measures for the reduction of that province."

Washington hailed the declaration with joy. It is true it was but a formal recognition of a state of things which had long existed, but it put an end to all those temporizing hopes of reconciliation which had clogged the military action of the country.

On the 9th of July he caused it to be read at six o'clock in the evening, at the head of each brigade of the army. "The general hopes," said he in his orders, "that this important event will serve as a fresh incentive to every officer and soldier to act with fidelity and courage, as knowing that now the peace and safety of his country depend, under God, solely on the success of our arms; and that he is now in the service of a state possessed of sufficient power to reward his merit, and advance him to the highest honors of a free country."

The excitable populace of New York were not content with the ringing of bells to proclaim their joy. There was a leaden statue of George III. on the Bowling Green, in front of the fort. Since kingly rule is at an end, why retain its effigy? On the same evening, therefore, the statue was pulled down amid the shouts of the multitude, and broken up to be run into bullets "to be used in the cause of independence."

Some of the soldiery having been implicated in this popular effervescence, Washington censured it in general orders, as having much the appearance of a riot and a want of discipline, and the army was forbidden to indulge in any irregularities of the kind. It was his constant effort to inspire his countrymen in arms with his own elevated idea of the cause in which they were engaged, and to make them feel that it was no ordinary warfare, admitting of vulgar passions and perturbations. "The general hopes and trusts,"

said he, "that every officer and man will endeavor so to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier, defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country." *

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Arrival of more Ships—Movements of the "Phœnix" and the "Rose"—Panic in the City—Hostile Ships up the Hudson—Stir of War along the River—General George Clinton, and the Militia of Ulster County—Fresh Agitation of New York—Arrival of Lord Howe

THE exultation of the patriots of New York, caused by the Declaration of Independence, was soon overclouded. On the 12th of July several ships stood in from sea and joined the naval force below. Every nautical movement was now a matter of speculation and alarm, and all the spyglasses in the city were incessantly reconnoitering the bay.

"The enemy are now in the harbor," writes an American officer, "although they have not yet ventured themselves within gunshot of the city, but we hourly expect to be called into action. The whole army is out between two and three every morning, at their respective alarm posts, and remain there until sunrise. I am morally certain that it will not be long before we have an engagement."

Scarce had this letter been penned, when two ships of war were observed getting under way and standing toward the city. One was the "Phœnix," of forty guns; the other the "Rose," of twenty guns, commanded by Captain Wallace, of unenviable renown, who had marauded the New England coast, and domineered over Rhode Island. The

* Orderly Book, July 9, Sparks, iii. 456.

troops were immediately at their alarm posts. It was about half-past three o'clock in the afternoon as the ships and three tenders came sweeping up the bay with the advantage of wind and tide, and shaped their course up the Hudson. The batteries of the city and of Paulus Hook, on the opposite Jersey shore, opened a fire upon them. They answered it with broadsides. There was a panic throughout the city. Women and children ran hither and thither about the streets, mingling their shrieks and cries with the thundering of the cannon. "The attack has begun! The city is to be destroyed! What will become of us?"

The "Phœnix" and the "Rose" continued their course up the Hudson. They had merely fired upon the batteries as they passed; and on their own part had sustained but little damage, their decks having ramparts of sand-bags. The ships below remained in sullen quiet at their anchors, and showed no intention of following them. The firing ceased. The fear of a general attack upon the city died away, and the agitated citizens breathed more freely.

Washington, however, apprehended this movement of the ships might be with a different object. They might be sent to land troops, and seize upon the passes of the Highlands. Forts Montgomery and Constitution were far from complete, and were scantily manned. A small force might be sufficient to surprise them. The ships might intend, also, to distribute arms among the tories in the river counties, and prepare them to co-operate in the apprehended attack upon New York.

Thus thinking, the moment Washington saw these ships standing up the river, he sent off an express to put General Mifflin on the alert, who was stationed with his Philadelphia troops at Fort Washington and King's Bridge. The same

express carried a letter from him to the New York Convention, at that time holding its sessions at White Plains, in Westchester County, apprising it of the impending danger. His immediate solicitude was for the safety of Forts Constitution and Montgomery.

Fortunately, George Clinton, the patriotic legislator, had recently been appointed brigadier-general of the militia of Ulster and Orange Counties. Called to his native State by his military duties in this time of danger, he had only remained in Congress to vote for the Declaration of Independence, and then hastened home. He was now at New Windsor, in Ulster County, just above the Highlands. Washington wrote to him on the afternoon of the 12th. urging him to collect as great a force as possible of the New York militia for the protection of the Highlands against this hostile irruption, and to solicit aid, if requisite, from the western parts of Connecticut. "I have the strongest reason to believe," added he, "it will be absolutely necessary, if it were only to prevent an insurrection of your own tories."

Long before the receipt of Washington's letter, Clinton had been put on the alert. About nine o'clock in the morning of the 13th an alarm gun from his brother at Fort Constitution thundered through the echoing defiles of the mountains. Shortly afterward two river sloops came to anchor above the Highlands, before the general's residence. Their captains informed him that New York had been attacked on the preceding afternoon. They had seen the cannonade from a distance, and judged from the subsequent firing that the enemy's ships were up the river as far as King's Bridge.

Clinton was as prompt a soldier as he had been an intrepid legislator. The neighboring militia were forthwith

put in motion. Three regiments were ordered out; one was to repair to Fort Montgomery; another to Fort Constitution; the third to rendezvous at Newburg, just above the Highlands, ready to hasten to the assistance of Fort Constitution, should another signal be given. All the other regiments under his command were to be prepared for service at a moment's notice. In ordering these hasty levies, however, he was as considerate as he was energetic. The colonels were directed to leave the frontier companies at home, to protect the country against the Indians, and some men out of each company to guard against internal enemies.

Another of his sagacious measures was to send expresses to all the owners of sloops and boats twenty miles up the west side of the river, to haul them off, so as to prevent their grounding. Part of them were to be ready to carry over the militia to the forts; the rest were ordered down to Fort Constitution, where a chain of them might be drawn across the narrowest part of the river, to be set on fire, should the enemy's ships attempt to pass.

Having made these prompt arrangements, he proceeded, early in the afternoon of the same day, with about forty of his neighbors, to Fort Constitution; whence, leaving some with his brother, he pushed down on the same evening to Fort Montgomery, where he fixed his headquarters, as being nearer the enemy, and better situated to discover their motions.

Here, on the following day (July 14), he received Washington's letter, written two days previously; but by this time he had anticipated its orders and stirred up the whole country. On that same evening two or three hundred of the hardy Ulster yeomanry, roughly equipped, part of one of the regiments he had ordered out, marched into Fort Mont-

gomery, headed by their colonel (Woodhull). Early the next morning five hundred of another regiment arrived, and he was told that parts of two other regiments were on the way.

"The men," writes he to Washington, "turn out of their harvest fields to defend their country with surprising alacrity. The absence of so many of them, however, at this time, when their harvests are perishing for want of the sickle, will greatly distress the country. I could wish, therefore, that a less number might answer the purpose."

On no one could this prompt and brave gathering of the yeomanry produce a more gratifying effect than upon the commander-in-chief; and no one could be more feelingly alive, in the midst of stern military duties, to the appeal in behalf of the peaceful interests of the husbandman.

While the vigilant Clinton was preparing to defend the passes of the Highlands, danger was growing more imminent at the mouth of the Hudson.

New York has always been a city prone to agitations. That into which it was thrown on the afternoon of the 12th of July, by the broadsides of the "Phœnix" and the "Rose," was almost immediately followed by another. On the same evening there was a great booming of cannon, with clouds of smoke, from the shipping at anchor at Staten Island. Every spyglass was again in requisition. The British fleet were saluting a ship of the line, just arrived from sea. She advanced grandly, every man-of war thundering a salute as she passed. At her foretop masthead she bore St. George's flag. "It is the admiral's ship!" cried the nautical men on the lookout at the Battery. "It is the admiral's ship!" was echoed from mouth to mouth, and the word soon flew throughout the city, "Lord Howe is come!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Precautions against Tories—Secret Committees—Declaration of Lord Howe—His Letter to the Colonial Governors—His Letter to Washington Rejected—Interview between the British Adjutant-General and Colonel Reed—Reception of the Adjutant-General by Washington—The "Phœnix" and "Rose" in the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay—Arming of the River Yeomanry—George Clinton at the Gates of the Highlands

Lord Howe was indeed come, and affairs now appeared to be approaching a crisis. In consequence of the recent conspiracy, the Convention of New York, seated at White Plains, in Westchester County, had a secret committee stationed in New York, for the purpose of taking cognizance of traitorous machinations. To this committee Washington addressed a letter, the day after his lordship's arrival, suggesting the policy of removing from the city and its environs, "all persons of known disaffection and enmity to the cause of America"; especially those confined in jail for treasonable offenses; who might become extremely dangerous in case of an attack and alarm. He took this step with great reluctance; but felt compelled to it by circumstances. The late conspiracy had shown him that treason might be lurking in his camp. And he was well aware that the city and the neighboring country, especially Westchester County, and Queen's and Suffolk Counties, on Long Island, abounded with "tories," ready to rally under the royal standard whenever backed by a commanding force.

In consequence of his suggestion, thirteen persons, in confinement for traitorous offenses, were removed to the

jail of Litchfield, in Connecticut. Among the number was the late mayor; but as his offense was not of so deep a dye as those whereof the rest stood charged, it was recommended by the President of the Convention that he should be treated with indulgence.

The proceedings of Lord Howe soon showed the policy of these precautions. His lordship had prepared a declaration, addressed to the people at large, informing them of the powers vested in his brother and himself as commissioners for restoring peace; and inviting communities as well as individuals who, in the tumult and disasters of the times, had deviated from their allegiance to the crown, to merit and receive pardon, by a prompt return to their duty. It was added that proper consideration would be had of the services of all who should contribute to the restoration of public tranquillity.

His lordship really desired peace. According to a contemporary, he came to America "as a mediator, not as a destroyer," * and had founded great hopes in the efficacy of this document in rallying back the people to their allegiance; it was a sore matter of regret to him, therefore, to find that, in consequence of his tardy arrival, his invitation to loyalty had been forestalled by the Declaration of Independence.

Still it might have an effect in bringing adherents to the royal standard; he sent a flag on shore, therefore, bearing a circular letter, written in his civil and military capacity, to the colonial governor, requesting him to publish his address to the people as widely as possible.

We have heretofore shown the tenacity with which Wash-

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* Letter of Mr. Dennis de Berdt to Mr. Joseph Reed. Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 372.

ington, in his correspondence with Generals Gage and Howe, exacted the consideration and deference due to him as commander-in-chief of the American armies; he did this not from official pride and punctilio, but as the guardian of American rights and dignities. A further step of the kind was yet to be taken. The British officers, considering the Americans in arms rebels without valid commissions, were in the habit of denying them all military title. Washington's general officers had urged him not to submit to this tacit indignity, but to reject all letters directed to him without a specification of his official rank. An occasion now presented itself for the adjustment of this matter. Within a day or two an officer of the British navy, Lieutenant Brown, came with a flag from Lord Howe, seeking a conference with Washington. Colonel Reed, the adjutant-general, embarked in a barge, and met him half way between Governor's and Staten Islands. The lieutenant informed him that he was the bearer of a letter from Lord Howe to *Mr.* Washington. Colonel Reed replied that he knew no such person in the American army. The lieutenant produced and offered the letter. It was addressed to George Washington, Esquire. He was informed that it could not be received with such a direction. The lieutenant expressed much concern. The letter, he said, was of a civil, rather than a military nature—Lord Howe regretted he had not arrived sooner —he had great powers—it was much to be wished the letter could be received.

While the lieutenant was embarrassed and agitated, Reed maintained his coolness, politely declining to receive the letter, as inconsistent with his duty. They parted; but after the lieutenant had been rowed some little distance, his barge was put about, and Reed waited to hear what further he had

to say. It was to ask by what title *General*—but catching himself—*Mr.* Washington chose to be addressed.

Reed replied that the general's station in the army was well known; and they could not be at a loss as to the proper mode of addressing him, especially as this matter had been discussed in the preceding summer, of which, he presumed, the admiral could not be ignorant. The lieutenant again expressed his disappointment and regret, and their interview closed.

On the 19th an aid-de-camp of General Howe came with a flag, and requested to know, as there appeared to be an obstacle to a correspondence between the two generals, whether Colonel Patterson, the British adjutant-general, could be admitted to an interview with General Washington. Colonel Reed, who met the flag, consented in the name of the general, and pledged his honor for the safety of the adjutant-general during the interview, which was fixed for the following morning.

At the appointed time, Colonel Reed and Colonel Webb, one of Washington's aides, met the flag in the harbor, took Colonel Patterson into their barge, and escorted him to town, passing in front of the grand battery. The customary precaution of blindfolding was dispensed with; and there was a lively and sociable conversation the whole way. Washington received the adjutant-general at headquarters with much form and ceremony, in full military array with his officers and guards about him.

Colonel Patterson, addressing him by the title of *your excellency*, endeavored to explain the address of the letter as consistent with propriety, and founded on a similar address in the previous summer to General Howe. That General Howe did not mean to derogate from the respect or rank

of General Washington, but conceived such an address consistent with what had been used by embassadors or plenipotentiaries where difficulties of rank had arisen. He then produced, but did not offer, a letter addressed to George Washington, Esquire, etc., etc., hoping that the et ceteras, which implied everything, would remove all impediments.

Washington replied that it was true the et ceteras implied everything, but they also implied anything. His letter alluded to, of the previous summer, was in reply to one addressed in like manner. A letter, he added, addressed to a person acting in a public character, should have some inscriptions to designate it from a mere private letter; and he should absolutely decline any letter addressed to himself as a private person, when it related to his public station.

Colonel Patterson, finding the letter would not be received, endeavored, as far as he could recollect, to communicate the scope of it in the course of a somewhat desultory conversation. What he chiefly dwelt upon was that Lord Howe and his brother had been specially nominated commissioners for the promotion of peace, which was esteemed a mark of favor and regard to America; that they had great powers, and would derive the highest pleasure from effecting an accommodation; and he concluded by adding that he wished his visit to be considered as making the first advance toward that desirable object.

Washington replied that, by what had appeared (alluding, no doubt, to Lord Howe's circular), their powers, it would seem, were only to grant pardons. Now those who had committed no fault needed no pardon; and such was the case with the Americans, who were only defending what they considered their indisputable rights.

Colonel Patterson avoided a discussion of this matter,

which, he observed, would open a very wide field; so here the conference, which had been conducted on both sides with great courtesy, terminated. The colonel took his leave, excusing himself from partaking of a collation, having made a late breakfast, and was again conducted to his boat. He expressed himself highly sensible of the courtesy of his treatment, in having the usual ceremony of blindfolding dispensed with.

Washington received the applause of Congress and of the public for sustaining the dignity of his station. His conduct in this particular was recommended as a model to all American officers in corresponding with the enemy; and Lord Howe informed his government that, thenceforward, it would be politic to change the superscription of his letters.

In the meantime the irruption of the "Phœnix" and the "Rose" into the waters of the Hudson had roused a belligerent spirit along its borders. The lower part of that noble river is commanded on the eastern side by the bold woody heights of Manhattan Island and Westchester County, and on the western side by the rocky cliffs of the Palisades. Beyond those cliffs the river expands into a succession of what may almost be termed lakes; first the Tappan Sea, then Haverstraw Bay, then the Bay of Peekskill; separated from each other by long stretching points, or high beetling promontories, but affording ample sea room and safe anchorage. Then come the redoubtable Highlands, that strait, fifteen miles in length, where the river bends its course, narrow and deep, between rocky, forest-clad mountains. "He who has command of that grand defile," said an old navigator, "may at any time throttle the Hudson."

The New York Convention, aware of the impending danger, dispatched military envoys to stir up the yeomanry

along the river, and order out militia. Powder and ball were sent to Tarrytown, before which the hostile ships were anchored, and yeoman troops were stationed there and along the neighboring shores of the Tappan Sea. In a little while the militia of Dutchess County and Cortlandt's Manor were hastening, rudely armed, to protect the public stores of Peekskill, and mount guard at the entrance of the Highlands.

No one showed more zeal in this time of alarm than Colonel Pierre Van Cortlandt, of an old colonial family, which held its manorial residence at the mouth of the Croton. With his regiment he kept a dragon watch along the eastern shore of the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; while equal vigilance was maintained night and day along the western shore, from Nyack quite up to the Dunderberg, by Colonel Hay and his regiment of Haverstraw. Sheep and cattle were driven inland, out of the reach of maraud. Sentinels were posted to keep a lookout from heights and headlands, and give the alarm should any boats approach the shore, and rustic marksmen were ready to assemble in a moment, and give them a warm reception.

The ships of war which caused this alarm and turmoil lay quietly anchored in the broad expanse of the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; shifting their ground occasionally, and keeping out of musket-shot of the shore, apparently sleeping in the summer sunshine, with awnings stretched above their decks; while their boats were out taking soundings quite up to the Highlands, evidently preparing for further operations. At night, too, their barges were heard rowing up and down the river on mysterious errands; periaugers, also, paid them furtive visits occasionally; it was surmised, with communications and supplies from tories on shore.

While the ships were anchored in Haverstraw Bay, one of the tenders stood into the Bay of Peekskill, and beat up within long shot of Fort Montgomery, where General George Clinton was ensconced with six hundred of the militia of Orange and Ulster Counties. As the tender approached, a thirty-two pounder was brought to range upon her. The ball passed through her quarter; whereupon she put about, and ran round the point of the Dunderberg, where the boat landed, plundered a solitary house at the foot of the mountain, and left it in flames. The marauders, on their way back to the ships, were severely galled by rustic marksmen from a neighboring promontory.

The ships, now acquainted with the channel, moved up within six miles of Fort Montgomery. General Clinton apprehended they might mean to take advantage of a dark night, and slip by him in the deep shadows of the mountains. The shores were high and bold, the river was deep, the navigation of course safe and easy. Once above the Highlands, they might ravage the country beyond and destroy certain vessels of war which were being constructed at Poughkeepsie.

To prevent this, he stationed a guard at night on the furthest point in view, about two miles and a half below the fort, prepared to kindle a blazing fire should the ships appear in sight. Large piles of dry brushwood mixed with combustibles were prepared at various places up and down the shore opposite to the fort, and men stationed to set fire to them as soon as a signal should be given from the lower point. The fort, therefore, while it remained in darkness, would have a fair chance with its batteries as the ships passed between it and these conflagrations.

A private committee sent up by the New York Conven-

tion had a conference with the general, to devise further means of obstructing the passage of ships up the river. Fire-rafts were to be brought from Poughkeepsie, and kept at hand ready for action. These were to be lashed two together, with chains, between old sloops filled with combustibles, and sent down with a strong wind and tide, to drive upon the ships. An iron chain, also, was to be stretched obliquely across the river from Fort Montgomery to the foot of Antony's Nose, thus, as it were, chaining up the gate of the Highlands.

For a protection below the Highlands, it was proposed to station whale-boats about the coves and promontories of Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay; to reconnoiter the enemy, cruise about at night, carry intelligence from post to post, seize any river craft that might bring the ships supplies, and cut off their boats when attempting to land. Galleys, also, were prepared, with nine-pounders mounted at the bows.

Colonel Hay of Haverstraw, in a letter to Washington, rejoices that the national Congress are preparing to protect this great highway of the country, and anticipates that the banks of the Hudson were about to become the chief theater of the war.

NOTE

The Van Cortlandt Family.—Two members of this old and honorable family were conspicuous patriots throughout the Revolution. Pierre Van Cortlandt, the father, at this time about fifty-six years of age, a stanch friend and ally of George Clinton, was member of the first Provincial Congress and president of the Committee of Public Safety. Governor Tryon had visited him in his old manor-house at the mouth of the Croton, in 1774, and made him offers of royal favors, honors, grants of land, etc., if he would aban-

don the popular cause. His offers were nobly rejected. The Cortlandt family suffered in consequence, being at one time obliged to abandon their manorial residence; but the head remained true to the cause, and subsequently filled the office of lieutenant-governor with great dignity.

His son Pierre, mentioned in the above chapter, and then about twenty-seven years of age, had likewise resisted the overtures of Tryon, destroying a major's commission in the Cortlandt militia, which he sent him. Congress, in 1775, made him lieutenant-colonel in the Continental service, in which capacity we now find him, acquitting himself with zeal and ability.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Question of Command between Gates and Schuyler—Condition of the Army at Crown Point—Discontent and Departure of Sullivan—Fortifications at Ticonderoga—The Question of Command Adjusted—Secret Discontents—Sectional Jealousies in the Army—Southern Troops—Smallwood's Macaroni Battalion—Connecticut Light-Horse

WHILE the security of the Hudson from invading ships was claiming the attention of Washington, he was equally anxious to prevent an irruption of the enemy from Canada. He was grieved, therefore, to find there was a clashing of authority between the generals who had charge of the Northern frontier. Gates, on his way to take command of the army in Canada, had heard with surprise in Albany of its retreat across the New York frontier. He still considered it under his orders, and was proceeding to act accordingly; when General Schuyler observed that the resolution of Congress and the instructions of Washington applied to the army only while in Canada; the moment it retreated within

the limits of New York it came within his (Schuyler's) command. A letter from Schuyler to Washington, written at the time, says: "If Congress intended that General Gates should command the Northern army, wherever it may be, as he assures me they did, it ought to have been signified to me, and I should then have immediately resigned the command to him; but until such intention is properly conveyed to me, I never can. I must, therefore, entreat your Excellency to lay this letter before Congress, that they may clearly and explicitly signify their intentions, to avert the dangers and evils that may arise from a disputed command."

That there might be no delay in the service at this critical juncture, the two generals agreed to refer the question of command to Congress, and in the meantime to act in concert. They accordingly departed together for Lake Champlain, to prepare against an anticipated invasion by Sir Guy Carleton. They arrived at Crown Point on the 6th of July, and found there the wrecks of the army recently driven out of Canada. They had been harassed in their retreat by land; their transportation on the lake had been in leaky boats without awnings, where the sick, suffering from smallpox, lay on straw, exposed to a burning July sun; no food but salt pork, often rancid, hard biscuit or unbaked flour, and scarcely any medicine. Not more than six thousand men had reached Crown Point, and half of those were on the sick list; the shattered remains of twelve or fifteen very fine battalions. Some few were sheltered in tents, some under sheds, and others in huts hastily formed of bushes; scarce one of which but contained a dead or dying man. Two thousand eight hundred were to be sent to a hospital recently established at the south end of Lake George, a distance of fifty miles; when they were gone, with those who were to row

them in boats, there would remain but the shadow of an army.*

In a council of war, it was determined that, under present circumstances, the post of Crown Point was not tenable; neither was it capable of being made so this summer, without a force greatly superior to any they might reasonably expect; and that, therefore, it was expedient to fall back, and take a strong position at Ticonderoga. General Sullivan had been deeply hurt that Gates, his former inferior in rank, should have been appointed over him to the command of the army in Canada; considering it a tacit intimation that Congress did not esteem him competent to the trust which had devolved upon him. He now, therefore, requested leave of absence, in order to wait on the commander in-chief. It was granted with reluctance. Before departing, he communicated to the army, through General Schuyler, his high and grateful sense of their exertions in securing a retreat from Canada, and the cheerfulness with which his commands had been received and obeyed.

On the 9th of July, Schuyler and Gates returned to Ticonderoga, accompanied by Arnold. Instant arrangements were made to encamp the troops, and land the artillery and stores as fast as they should arrive. Great exertions, also, were made to strengthen the defenses of the place. Colonel John Trumbull, who was to have accompanied Gates to Canada, as adjutant-general, had been reconnoitering the neighborhood of Ticonderoga, and had pitched upon a place for a fortification on the eastern side of the lake, directly opposite the east point of Ticonderoga, where Fort Independence was subsequently built. He also advised the

* Colonel John Trumbull's Autobiography, p. 285, Appendix.

erection of a work on a lofty eminence, the termination of a mountain ridge, which separates Lake George from Lake Champlain. His advice was unfortunately disregarded. The eminence, subsequently called Mount Defiance, looked down upon and commanded the narrow parts of both lakes. We shall hear more of it hereafter.

Preparations were made, also, to augment the naval force on the lakes. Ship carpenters from the Eastern States were employed at Skenesborough to build the hulls of galleys and boats, which, when launched, were to be sent down to Ticonderoga for equipment and armament, under the superintendence of General Arnold.

Schuyler soon returned to Albany, to superintend the general concerns of the Northern department. He was indefatigable in procuring and forwarding the necessary materials and artillery for the fortification of Ticonderoga.

The question of command between him and Gates was apparently at rest. A letter from the President of Congress, dated July 8, informed General Gates that according to the resolution of that body under which he had been appointed, his command was totally independent of General Schuyler, *while the army was in Canada*, but no longer. Congress had no design to divest General Schuyler of the command while the troops were *on this side of Canada*.

To Schuyler, under the same date, the president writes: "The Congress highly approve of your patriotism and magnanimity in not suffering any difference of opinion to hurt the public service.

"A mutual confidence and good understanding are at this time essentially necessary, so that I am persuaded they will take place on all occasions between yourself and General Gates."

Gates professed himself entirely satisfied with the explanation he had received, and perfectly disposed to obey the commands of Schuyler. "I am confident," added he, "we shall, as the Congress wish, go hand in hand to promote the public welfare."

Schuyler, too, assured both Congress and Washington, "that the difference in opinion between Gates and himself had not caused the least ill will, nor interrupted that harmony necessary to subsist between their officers."

Samuel Adams, however, who was at that time in Congress, had strong doubts in the matter.

"Schuyler and Gates are to command the troops," writes he, "the former while they are without, the latter while they are within, the bounds of Canada. Admitting these generals to have the accomplishments of a Marlborough, or a Eugene, I cannot conceive that such a disposition of them will be attended with any good effects, unless harmony subsists between them. Alas! I fear this is not the case. Already disputes have arisen, which they have referred to Congress; and, although they affect to treat each other with a politeness becoming their rank, in my mind altercations between commanders who have pretensions nearly equal (I mean in point of command), forebode a repetition of misfortune. I sincerely wish my apprehensions may prove groundless." *

We have a letter before us, also, written to Gates by his friend Joseph Trumbull, commissary-general, on whose appointment of a deputy the question of command had arisen. Trumbull's letter was well calculated to inflame the jealousy of Gates. "I find you are in a cursed situation," writes he;

* S. Adams to R. H. Lee. Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 347.

"your authority at an end; and commanded by a person who will be willing to have you knocked in the head, as General Montgomery was, if he can have the money chest in his power."

Governor Trumbull, too, the father of the commissary-general, observes subsequently: "It is justly to be expected that General Gates is discontented with his situation, finding himself limited and removed from command, to be a wretched spectator of the ruin of the army, without power of attempting to save them." * We shall have frequent occasion hereafter to notice the discord in the service caused by this rankling discontent.

As to General Sullivan, who repaired to Philadelphia and tendered his resignation, the question of rank which had aggrieved him was explained in a manner that induced him to continue in service. It was universally allowed that his retreat had been ably conducted through all kinds of difficulties and disasters.

A greater source of solicitude to Washington than this jealousy between commanders was the sectional jealousy springing up among the troops. In a letter to Schuyler (July 17), he says, "I must entreat your attention to do away the unhappy and pernicious distinctions and jealousies between the troops of different governments. Enjoin this upon the officers, and let them inculcate and press home to the soldiery the necessity of order and harmony among those who are embarked in one common cause, and mutually contending for all that freemen hold dear."

Nowhere were these sectional jealousies more prevalent than in the motley army assembled from distant quarters

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* Gov. Trumbull to Mr. William Williams.

under Washington's own command. Reed, the adjutant-general, speaking on this subject, observes: "The Southern troops, comprising the regiments south of the Delaware, looked with very unkind feelings on those of New England; especially those from Connecticut, whose peculiarities of deportment made them the objects of ill-disguised derision among their fellow-soldiers." *

Among the troops thus designated as Southern were some from Virginia under a Major Leitch; others from Maryland, under Colonel Smallwood; others from Delaware, led by Colonel Haslet. There were four Continental battalions from Pennsylvania, commanded by Colonels Shee, St. Clair, Wayne, and Magaw; and provincial battalions, two of which were severally commanded by Colonels Miles and Atlee. The Continental battalion under Colonel Shee was chiefly from the city of Philadelphia, especially the officers; among whom were Lambert Cadwalader and William Allen, members of two of the principal and most aristocratic families, and Alexander Graydon, to whose memoirs we are indebted for some graphic pictures of the times.

These Pennsylvania troops were under the command of Brigadier-general Mifflin, who, in the preceding year, had acted as Washington's aid-de-camp, and afterward as quartermaster-general. His townsman and intimate, Graydon, characterizes him as a man of education and cultivated manners, with a great talent at haranguing; highly animated in his appearance, full of activity and apparently of fire; but rather too much of a bustler, harassing his men unnecessarily. "He assumed," adds Graydon, "a little of the veteran, from having been before Boston." His troops were

* Life of Reed, vol. i., p. 239.

chiefly encamped near King's Bridge, and employed in constructing works at Fort Washington.

Smallwood's Maryland battalion was one of the brightest in point of equipment. The scarlet and buff uniforms of those Southerners contrasted vividly with the rustic attire of the yeoman battalions from the East. Their officers, too, looked down upon their Connecticut compeers, who could only be distinguished from their men by wearing a cockade. "There were none," says Graydon, "by whom an unofficer-like appearance and deportment could be tolerated less than by a city-bred Marylander; who, at this time, was distinguished by the most fashionable cut coat, the most *macaroni* cocked hat, and hottest blood in the Union." Alas, for the homespun-clad officers from Connecticut River!

The Pennsylvania regiment under Shee, according to Graydon, promoted balls and other entertainments, in contradistinction to the fast-days and sermons borrowed from New England. There was nothing of the puritanical spirit among the Pennsylvanian soldiery.

In the same sectional spirit, he speaks of the Connecticut light-horse: "Old-fashioned men, truly irregulars; whether their clothing, equipments, or caparisons were regarded, it would have been difficult to have discovered any circumstance of uniformity. Instead of carbines and sabers, they generally carried fowling-pieces, some of them very long, such as in Pennsylvania are used for shooting ducks. Here and there one appeared in a dingy regimental of scarlet, with a triangular, tarnished, laced hat. These singular dragoons were volunteers, who came to make a tender of their services to the commander-in-chief. But they stayed not long in New York. As such a body of cavalry had not been counted upon, there was in all probability a want of forage for their

jades, which, in the spirit of ancient knighthood, they absolutely refused to descend from; and as the general had no use for cavaliers in his insular operations, they were forthwith dismissed, with suitable acknowledgments for their truly chivalrous ardor." *

The troops thus satirized were a body of between four and five hundred Connecticut light-horse, under Colonel Thomas Seymour. On an appeal for aid to the governor of their State, they had voluntarily hastened on in advance of the militia to render the most speedy succor. Supposing, from the suddenness and urgency of the call upon their services, that they were immediately to be called into action and promptly to return home, they had come on in such haste that many were unprovided even with a blanket or a change of clothing.

Washington speaks of them as being for the most part, if not all, men of reputation and property. They were, in fact, mostly farmers. As to their sorry *jades*, they were rough country horses, such as farmers keep, not for show, but service. As to their dingy regimentals, we quote a word in their favor from a writer of that day. "Some of these worthy soldiers assisted in their present uniforms at the reduction of Louisburg, and their 'lank cheeks and war-worn coats' are viewed with more veneration by their honest countrymen than if they were glittering nabobs from India or bashaws with nine tails." †

On arriving, their horses, from scarcity of forage, had to be pastured about King's Bridge. In fact, Washington informed them that, under present circumstances, they could

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* Graydon's Memoirs, p. 155.
† Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 175.

not be of use as horsemen; on which they concluded to stay and do duty on foot till the arrival of the new levies.*

In a letter to Governor Trumbull (July 11th), Washington observes: "The officers and men of that corps have manifested so firm an attachment to the cause we are engaged in that they have consented to remain here till such a body of troops are marched from your colony as will be a sufficient re-enforcement, so as to admit of their leaving this city with safety. . . . They have the additional merit of determining to stay, even if they are obliged to maintain their horses at their own expense." †

In a very few days, however, the troopers, on being requested to mount guard like other soldiers, grew restless and uneasy. Colonel Seymour and his brother field officers, therefore, addressed a note to Washington, stating that, by the positive laws of Connecticut, the light-horse were expressly exempted from staying in garrison, or doing duty on foot, apart from their horses; and that they found it impossible to detain their men any longer under that idea, they having come "without the least expectation or preparation for such services." They respectfully, therefore, asked a dismission in form. Washington's brief reply shows that he was nettled by their conduct.

"GENTLEMEN—In answer to yours of this date, I can only repeat to you what I said last night, and that is, that if your men think themselves exempt from the common duty of a soldier—will not mount guard, do garrison duty, or service separate from their horses—they can no longer be of any use

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* Webb to Gov. Trumbull.
† Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 192.

here, where horses cannot be brought to action, and I do not care how soon they are dismissed."

In fact, the assistance of these troops was much needed; yet he apprehended the exemption from fatigue and garrison duty which they demanded as a right, would, if granted, set a dangerous example to others, and be productive of many evil consequences.

In the hurry of various concerns he directed his aid-de-camp, Colonel Webb, to write in his name to Governor Trumbull on the subject.

Colonel Seymour, on his return home, addressed a long letter to the governor explanatory of his conduct. "I can't help remarking to your honor," adds he, "that it may with truth be said General Washington is a gentleman of extreme care and caution: that his requisitions for men are fully equal to the necessities of the case. . . . I should have stopped here, but am this moment informed that Mr. Webb, General Washington's aid-de-camp, has written to your honor something dishonorable to the light-horse. Whatever it may be I know not, but this I do know, that it is a general observation, both in camp and country, if the butterflies and coxcombs were away from the army we should not be put to so much difficulty in obtaining men of common sense to engage in the defense of their country." *

As to the Connecticut infantry which had been furnished by Governor Trumbull in the present emergency, they likewise were substantial farmers, whose business, he observed, would require their return when the necessity of their further stay in the army should be over. They were all men of simple rural manners, from an agricultural State, where great

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 513.

equality of condition prevailed; the officers were elected by the men out of their own ranks, they were their own neighbors, and every way their equals. All this, as yet, was but little understood or appreciated by the troops from the South, among whom military rank was more defined and tenaciously observed, and where the officers were men of the cities and of more aristocratic habits.

We have drawn out from contemporary sources these few particulars concerning the sectional jealousies thus early springing up among the troops from the different States, to show the difficulties with which Washington had to contend at the outset, and which formed a growing object of solicitude throughout the rest of his career.

John Adams, speaking of the violent passions and discordant interests at work throughout the country, from Florida to Canada, observes: "It requires more serenity of temper, a deeper understanding, and more courage than fell to the lot of Marlborough, to ride in this whirlwind." *

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Southern Cruise of Sir Henry Clinton—Fortifications at Charleston—Arrival there of General Lee—Battle at Sullivan's Island—Washington announces the result to the Army

Letters from General Lee gave Washington intelligence of the fate of Sir Henry Clinton's expedition to the South; that expedition which had been the subject of so much surmise and perplexity. Sir Henry, in his cruise along the coast, had been repeatedly foiled by Lee. First, as we have shown, when he looked in at New York; next, when he

* Am. Archives, 4th Series, v. 1112.

paused at Norfolk, in Virginia; and lastly, when he made a bold attempt at Charleston, in South Carolina; for scarce did his ships appear off the harbor than the omnipresent Lee was marching his troops into the city.

Within a year past, Charleston had been fortified at various points. Fort Johnson, on James Island, three miles from the city, and commanding the breadth of the channel, was garrisoned by a regiment of South Carolina regulars under Colonel Gadsden. A strong fort had recently been constructed nearly opposite, on the southwest point of Sullivan's Island, about six miles below the city. It was mounted with twenty-six guns, and garrisoned by three hundred and seventy-five regulars and a few militia, and commanded by Colonel William Moultrie, of South Carolina, who had constructed it. This fort, in connection with that on James Island, was considered the key of the harbor.

Cannon had also been mounted on Haddrell's Point, on the mainland, to the northwest of Sullivan's Island, and along the bay in front of the town.

The arrival of General Lee gave great joy to the people of Charleston, from his high reputation for military skill and experience. According to his own account, in a letter to Washington, the town on his arrival was "utterly defenseless." He was rejoiced, therefore, when the enemy, instead of immediately attacking it, directed his whole force against the fort on Sullivan's Island. "He has lost an opportunity," said Lee, "such as I hope will never occur again, of taking the town."

The British ships, in fact, having passed the bar with some difficulty, landed their troops on Long Island, situated to the east of Sullivan's Island, and separated from it by a small creek called the Breach. Sir Henry Clinton meditated

a combined attack with his land and naval forces on the fort commanded by Moultrie; the capture of which, he thought, would insure the reduction of Charleston.

The Americans immediately threw up works on the north-eastern extremity of Sullivan's Island to prevent the passage of the enemy over the Breach, stationing a force of regulars and militia there, under Colonel Thompson. General Lee encamped on Haddrell's Point, on the mainland, to the north of the island, whence he intended to keep up a communication by a bridge of boats, so as to be ready at any moment to aid either Moultrie or Thompson.

Sir Henry Clinton, on the other hand, had to construct batteries on Long Island, to oppose those of Thompson, and cover the passage of his troops by boats or by the ford. Thus time was consumed, and the enemy were, from the 1st to the 28th of June, preparing for the attack; their troops suffering from the intense heat of the sun on the burning sands of Long Island, and both fleet and army complaining of brackish water and scanty and bad provisions.

At length, on the 28th of June, the "Thunder Bomb" commenced the attack, throwing shells at the fort, as the fleet, under Sir Peter Parker, advanced. About eleven o'clock the ships dropped their anchors directly before the front battery. "I was at this time in a boat," writes Lee, "endeavoring to make the island; but the wind and tide being violently against us, drove us on the main. They immediately commenced the most furious fire I ever heard or saw. I confess I was in pain, from the little confidence I reposed in our troops; the officers being all boys, and the men raw recruits. What augmented my anxiety was that we had no bridge finished for retreat or communication; and the creek or cove which separates it from the continent is near a mile

wide. I had received, likewise, intelligence that their land troops intended at the same time to land and assault. I never in my life felt myself so uneasy; and what added to my uneasiness was that I knew our stock of ammunition was miserably low. I had once thought of ordering the commanding officer to spike his guns, and, when his ammunition was spent, to retreat with as little loss as possible. However, I thought proper previously to send to town for a fresh supply, if it could possibly be procured, and ordered my aid-de-camp, Mr. Byrd (who is a lad of magnanimous courage), to pass over in a small canoe and report the state of the spirit of the garrison. If it had been low, I should have abandoned all thoughts of defense. His report was flattering. I then determined to maintain the post at all risks, and passed the creek or cove in a small boat, in order to animate the garrison in propria personâ; but I found they had no occasion for such an encouragement.

"They were pleased with my visit, and assured me they never would abandon the post but with their lives. The cool courage they displayed astonished and enraptured me, for I do assure you, my dear general, I never experienced a better fire. Twelve full hours it was continued without intermission. The noble fellows who were mortally wounded conjured their brethren never to abandon the standard of liberty. Those who lost their limbs deserted not their posts. Upon the whole, they acted like Romans in the third century."

Much of the foregoing is corroborated by the statement of a British historian. "While the continued fire of our ships," writes he, "seemed sufficient to shake the fierceness of the bravest enemy and daunt the courage of the most veteran soldier, the return made by the fort could not fail call-

ing for the respect, as well as of highly incommoding the brave seamen of Britain. In the midst of that dreadful roar of artillery they stuck with the greatest constancy and firmness to their guns; fired deliberately and slowly, and took a cool and effective aim. The ships suffered accordingly; they were torn almost to pieces, and the slaughter was dreadful. Never did British valor shine more conspicuous, and never did our marine in an engagement of the same nature with any foreign enemy experience so rude an encounter." *

The fire from the ships did not produce the expected effect. The fortifications were low, composed of earth and palmetto wood, which is soft, and makes no splinters, and the merlons were extremely thick. At one time there was a considerable pause in the American fire, and the enemy thought the fort was abandoned. It was only because the powder was exhausted. As soon as a supply could be forwarded from the mainland by General Lee, the fort resumed its fire with still more deadly effect. Through unskillful pilotage, several of the ships ran aground, where one, the frigate "Actæon," remained; the rest were extricated with difficulty. Those which bore the brunt of the action were much cut up. One hundred and seventy-five men were killed, and nearly as many wounded. Captain Scott, commanding the "Experiment," of fifty guns, lost an arm, and was otherwise wounded. Captain Morris, commanding the "Actæon," was slain. So also was Lord Campbell, late governor of the province, who served as a volunteer on board of the squadron.

Sir Henry Clinton, with two thousand troops and five or six hundred seamen, attempted repeatedly to cross from

* Hist. Civil War in America. Dublin, 1779. Annual Register.

Long Island and co-operate in the attack upon the fort, but was as often foiled by Colonel Thompson, with his battery of two cannons and a body of South Carolina rangers and North Carolina regulars. "Upon the whole," says Lee, "the South and North Carolina troops and Virginia rifle battalion we have here are admirable soldiers."

The combat slackened before sunset, and ceased before ten o'clock. Sir Peter Parker, who had received a severe contusion in the engagement, then slipped his cables and drew off his shattered ships to Five Fathom Hole. The "Actæon" remained aground.

On the following morning Sir Henry Clinton made another attempt to cross from Long Island to Sullivan's Island; but was again repulsed, and obliged to take shelter behind his breastworks. Sir Peter Parker, too, giving up all hope of reducing the fort in the shattered condition of his ships, ordered that the "Actæon" should be set on fire and abandoned. The crew left her in flames, with the guns loaded and the colors flying. The Americans boarded her in time to haul down her colors and secure them as a trophy, discharge her guns at one of the enemy's ships, and load three boats with stores. They then abandoned her to her fate, and in half an hour she blew up.

Within a few days the troops were re-embarked from Long Island; the attempt upon Charleston was for the present abandoned, and the fleet once more put to sea.

In this action, one of the severest in the whole course of the war, the loss of the Americans in killed and wounded was but thirty-five men. Colonel Moultrie derived the greatest glory from the defense of Sullivan's Island; though the thanks of Congress were voted as well to General Lee, Colonel Thompson, and those under their command.

"For God's sake, my dear general," writes Lee to Washington, "urge the Congress to furnish me with a thousand cavalry. With a thousand cavalry I could insure the safety of these Southern provinces; and without cavalry I can answer for nothing. From want of this species of troops we had infallibly lost this capital, but the dilatoriness and stupidity of the enemy saved us."

The tidings of this signal repulse of the enemy came most opportunely to Washington, when he was apprehending an attack upon New York. He writes in a familiar vein to Schuyler on the subject. "Sir Peter Parker and his fleet got a severe drubbing in an attack upon our works on Sullivan's Island, just by Charleston, in South Carolina; a part of their troops at the same time, in attempting to land, were repulsed." He assumed a different tone in announcing it to the army in a general order of the 21st July. "This generous example of our troops under the like circumstances with us, the general hopes, will animate every officer and soldier to imitate, and even outdo them, when the enemy shall make the same attempt on us. With such a bright example before us of what can be done by brave men fighting in defense of their country, we shall be loaded with a double share of shame and infamy if we do not acquit ourselves with courage, and manifest a determined resolution to conquer or die."

CHAPTER THIRTY

Putnam's Military Projects—Chevaux-de-frise at Fort Washington —Meditated Attack on Staten Island—Arrival of Ships—Hessian Re-enforcements—Scotch Highlanders—Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis—Putnam's Obstructions of the Hudson—The "Phœnix" and "Rose" attacked by Row Galleys at Tarrytown—General Order of Washington on the subject of Sectional Jealousies—Profane Swearing prohibited in the Camp —Preparations against Attack—Levies of Yeomanry—George Clinton in Command of the Levies along the Hudson—Alarms of the People of New York—Benevolent Sympathy of Washington—The "Phœnix" Grappled by a Fire-Ship—The Ships Evacuate the Hudson

General Putnam, besides his bravery in the field, was somewhat of a mechanical projector. The batteries at Fort Washington had proved ineffectual in opposing the passage of hostile ships up the Hudson. He was now engaged on a plan for obstructing the channel opposite the fort, so as to prevent the passing of any more ships. A letter from him to General Gates (July 26th) explains his project. "We are preparing chevaux-de-frise, at which we make great dispatch by the help of ships, which are to be sunk—a scheme of mine which you may be assured is very simple; a plan of which I send you. The two ships' sterns lie toward each other, about seventy feet apart. Three large logs, which reach from ship to ship, are fastened to them. The two ships and logs stop the river two hundred and eighty feet. The ships are to be sunk, and when hauled down on one side the pricks will be raised to a proper height, and they must inevitably stop the river, if the enemy will let us sink them."

It so happened that one Ephraim Anderson, adjutant to

the second Jersey battalion, had recently submitted a project to Congress for destroying the enemy's fleet in the harbor of New York. He had attempted an enterprise of the kind against the British ships in the harbor of Quebec during the siege, and, according to his own account, would have succeeded, had not the enemy discovered his intentions and stretched a cable across the mouth of the harbor, and had he not accidentally been much burned.

His scheme was favorably entertained by Congress, and Washington, by a letter dated July 10th, was instructed to aid him in carrying it into effect. Anderson, accordingly, was soon at work at New York constructing fire-ships, with which the fleet was to be attacked. Simultaneous with the attack, a descent was to be made on the British camp on Staten Island, from the nearest point of the Jersey shore, by troops from Mercer's flying camp, and by others stationed at Bergen under Major Knowlton, Putnam's favorite officer for daring enterprises.

Putnam entered into the scheme as zealously as if it had been his own. Indeed by the tenor of his letter to Gates, already quoted, he seemed almost to consider it so. "The enemy's fleet," writes he, "now lies in the bay, close under Staten Island. Their troops possess no land here but the island. Is it not strange that those invincible troops, who were to lay waste all this country with their fleets and army, are so fond of islands and peninsulas, and dare not put their feet on the main? But I hope, by the blessing of God, and good friends, we shall pay them a visit on their island. For that end we are preparing fourteen fire-ships, to go into their fleet, some of which are ready charged and fitted to sail, and I hope soon to have them all fixed."

Anderson, also, on the 31st July, writes from New York

to the President of Congress: "I have been for some time past very assiduous in the preparation of fire-ships. Two are already complete, and hauled off into the stream; two more will be off to-morrow, and the residue in a very short time. In my next, I hope to give you a particular account of a general conflagration, as everything in my power shall be exerted for the demolition of the enemy's fleet. I expect to take an active part, and be an instrument for that purpose. I am determined (God willing) to make a conspicuous figure among them, by being a 'burning and shining light,' and thereby serve my country, and have the honor of meeting the approbation of Congress."*

Projectors are subject to disappointments. It was impossible to construct a sufficient number of fire-ships and galleys in time. The flying camp, too, recruited but slowly, and scarcely exceeded three thousand men; the combined attack by fire and sword had therefore to be given up, and the "burning and shining light" again failed of conflagration.

Still, a partial night attack on the Staten Island encampment was concerted by Mercer and Knowlton, and twice attempted. On one occasion they were prevented from crossing the strait by tempestuous weather, on another by deficiency of boats.

In the course of a few days arrived a hundred sail, with large re-enforcements, among which were one thousand Hessians, and as many more were reported to be on the way. The troops were disembarked on Staten Island, and fortifications thrown up on some of the most commanding hills.

All projects of attack upon the enemy were now out of the question. Indeed, some of Washington's ablest advisers

* Am. Archives, 4th Series, i. 155.

questioned the policy of remaining in New York, where they might be entrapped as the British had been in Boston. Reed, the adjutant-general, observed that, as the communication by the Hudson was interrupted, there was nothing now to keep them at New York but a mere point of honor; in the meantime, they endangered the loss of the army and its military stores. Why should they risk so much in defending a city while the greater part of its inhabitants were plotting their destruction? His advice was, that, when they could defend the city no longer, they should evacuate and burn it, and retire from Manhattan Island; should avoid any general action, or indeed any action, unless in view of great advantages; and should make it a war of posts.

During the latter part of July and the early part of August, ships of war with their tenders continued to arrive, and Scotch Highlanders, Hessians, and other troops, to be landed on Staten Island. At the beginning of August, the squadron with Sir Henry Clinton, recently repulsed at Charleston, anchored in the bay. "His coming," writes Colonel Reed, "was as unexpected as if he had dropped from the clouds." He was accompanied by Lord Cornwallis, and brought three thousand troops.

In the meantime, Putnam's contrivances for obstructing the channel had reached their destined place. A letter dated Fort Washington, August 3d, says: "Four ships, chained and boomed, with a number of amazing large chevaux-de-frise, were sunk close by the fort under command of General Mifflin, which fort mounts thirty-two pieces of heavy cannon. We are thoroughly sanguine that they [the ships up the river] never will be able to join the British fleet, nor assistance from the fleet be afforded to them; so that we may set them down as our own."

Another letter, written at the same date from Tarrytown, on the borders of the Tappan Sea, gives an account of an attack made by six row galleys upon the "Phœnix" and "Rose." They fought bravely for two hours, hulling the ships repeatedly, but sustaining great damage in return; until their commodore, Colonel Tupper, gave the signal to draw off. "Never," says the writer, "did men behave with more firm, determined spirit than our little crew. One of our tars being mortally wounded, cried to his companions: 'I am a dying man; revenge my blood, my boys, and carry me alongside my gun that I may die there.' We were so preserved by a gracious Providence that in all our galleys we have but two men killed and fourteen wounded, two of which are thought dangerous. We hope to have another touch at those pirates before they leave our river; which God prosper!"

Such was the belligerent spirit prevailing up the Hudson.

The force of the enemy collected in the neighborhood of New York was about thirty thousand men; that of the Americans a little more than seventeen thousand, but was subsequently increased to twenty thousand, for the most part raw and undisciplined. One-fourth were on the sick list with bilious and putrid fevers and dysentery; others were absent on furlough or command; the rest had to be distributed over posts and stations fifteen miles apart.

The sectional jealousies prevalent among them were more and more a subject of uneasiness to Washington. In one of his general orders he observes: "It is with great concern that the general understands that jealousies have arisen among the troops from the different provinces, and reflections are frequently thrown out which can only tend to irritate each other, and injure the noble cause in which we are

engaged, and which we ought to support with one hand and one heart. The general most earnestly entreats the officers and soldiers to consider the consequences; that they can no way assist our enemies more effectually than by making divisions among ourselves; that the honor and success of the army, and the safety of our bleeding country, depend upon harmony and good agreement with each other; that the provinces are all united to oppose the common enemy, and all distinctions sunk in the name of an American. To make this name honorable, and to preserve the liberty of our country, ought to be our only emulation; and he will be the best soldier and the best patriot who contributes most to this glorious work, whatever be his station, or from whatever part of the continent he may come. Let all distinctions of nations, countries, and provinces, therefore, be lost in the generous contest who shall behave with the most courage against the enemy and the most kindness and good humor to each other. If there be any officers or soldiers so lost to virtue and a love of their country as to continue in such practices after this order, the general assures them, and is authorized by Congress to declare to the whole army, that such persons shall be severely punished and dismissed from the service with disgrace."

The urgency of such a general order is apparent in that early period of our confederation, when its various parts had not as yet been sufficiently welded together to acquire a thorough feeling of nationality; yet what an enduring lesson does it furnish for every stage of our Union!

We subjoin another of the general orders issued in this time of gloom and anxiety:

"That the troops may have an opportunity of attending public worship, as well as to take some rest after the great

fatigue they have gone through, the general, in future, excuses them from fatigue duty on Sundays, except at the shipyards or on special occasions, until further orders. The general is sorry to be informed that the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing, a vice heretofore little known in an American army, is growing into fashion. He hopes the officers will, by example as well as influence, endeavor to check it, and that both they and the men will reflect that we can have little hope of the blessing of Heaven on our arms if we insult it by our impiety and folly. Added to this, it is a vice so mean and low, without any temptation, that every man of sense and character detests and despises it." *

While Washington thus endeavored to elevate the minds of his soldiery to the sanctity of the cause in which they were engaged, he kept the most watchful eye upon the movements of the enemy. Besides their great superiority in point of numbers as well as discipline, to his own crude and scanty legions, they possessed a vast advantage in their fleet. "They would not be half the enemy they are," observed Colonel Reed, "if they were once separated from their ships." Every arrival and departure of these, therefore, was a subject of speculation and conjecture. Aaron Burr, at that time in New York, aid-de-camp to General Putnam, speaks in a letter to an uncle, of thirty transports, which, under convoy of three frigates, had put to sea on the 7th of August, with the intention of sailing round Long Island and coming through the Sound, and thus investing the city by the North and East Rivers. "They are then to land on both sides of the island," writes he, "join their forces, and draw a line

* Orderly Book, August 3, as cited by Sparks. Writings of Washington, vol. iv., p. 28.

across, which will hem us in and totally cut off all communication; after which they will have their own fun." He adds: "They hold us in the utmost contempt. Talk of forcing all our lines without firing a gun. The bayonet is their pride. They have forgot Bunker's Hill." *

In this emergency, Washington wrote to General Mercer for two thousand men from the flying camp. Colonel Smallwood's battalion was immediately furnished, as a part of them. The Convention of the State ordered out hasty levies of country militia, to form temporary camps on the shore of the Sound, and on that of the Hudson above King's Bridge, to annoy the enemy, should they attempt to land from their ships on either of these waters. Others were sent to reenforce the posts on Long Island. As King's County, on Long Island, was noted for being a stronghold of the disaffected, the Convention ordered that, should any of the militia of that county refuse to serve, they should be disarmed and secured, and their possessions laid waste.

Many of the yeomen of the country, thus hastily summoned from the plow, were destitute of arms, in lieu of which they were ordered to bring with them a shovel, spade, or pickax, or a scythe straightened and fastened to a pole. This rustic array may have provoked the thoughtless sneers of city scoffers, such as those cited by Graydon; but it was in truth one of the glorious features of the Revolution to be thus aided in its emergencies by "hasty levies of husbandmen." †

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* Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 887.

† General orders, Aug. 8th, show the feverish state of affairs in the city. "As the movements of the enemy and intelligence by deserters give the utmost reason to believe that the great struggle in which we are contending for every-

By the authority of the New York Convention, Washington had appointed General George Clinton to the command of the levies on both sides of the Hudson. He now ordered him to hasten down with them to the fort just erected on the north side of King's Bridge; leaving two hundred men under the command of a brave and alert officer to throw up works at the pass of Antony's Nose, where the main road to Albany crosses that mountain. Troops of horse also were to be posted by him along the river to watch the motions of the enemy.

Washington now made the last solemn preparations for the impending conflict. All suspected persons, whose presence might promote the plans of the enemy, were removed to a distance. All papers respecting affairs of State were put up in a large case, to be delivered to Congress. As to his domestic arrangements, Mrs. Washington had some time previous gone to Philadelphia with the intention of returning

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thing dear to us and our posterity is near at hand, the general most earnestly recommends the closest attention to the state of the men's arms, ammunition, and flints; that if we should be suddenly called to action nothing of this kind may be to provide. And he does most anxiously exhort both officers and soldiers not to be out of their quarters or encampments, especially in the morning, or upon the tide of flood.

"A flag in the daytime, or a light at night, in the fort on Bayard's Hill, with three guns from the same place fired quick but distinct, is to be considered as a signal for the troops to repair to their alarm posts and prepare for action. And that the alarm may be more effectually given, the drums are immediately to beat to arms upon the signal being given from Bayard's Hill. This order is not to be considered as countermanding the firing two guns at Fort George, as formerly ordered. That is also to be done on an alarm, but the flag will not be hoisted at the old headquarters in Broadway."—Am. Archives, 5th Series, i. 912.

to Virginia, as there was no prospect of her being with him any part of the summer, which threatened to be one of turmoil and danger. The other ladies, wives of general officers, who used to grace and enliven headquarters, had all been sent out of the way of the storm which was lowering over this devoted city.

Accounts of deserters, and other intelligence, informed Washington, on the 17th, that a great many of the enemy's troops had gone on board of the transports; that three days' provisions had been cooked, and other steps taken indicating an intention of leaving Staten Island. Putnam, also, came up from below with word that at least one-fourth of the fleet had sailed. There were many conjectures at headquarters as to whither they were bound, or whether they had not merely shifted their station. Everything indicated, however, that affairs were tending to a crisis.

The "hysterical alarms" of the peaceful inhabitants of New York, which had provoked the soldier-like impatience and satirical sneers of Lee, inspired different sentiments in the benevolent heart of Washington, and produced the following letter to the New York Convention:

"When I consider that the city of New York will, in all human probability, very soon be the scene of a bloody conflict, I cannot but view the great numbers of women, children, and infirm persons remaining in it with the most melancholy concern. When the men-of-war (the "Phœnix" and "Rose") passed up the river, the shrieks and cries of these poor creatures, running every way with their children, were truly distressing, and I fear they will have an unhappy effect upon the ears and minds of our young and inexperienced soldiery. Can no method be devised for their removal?"

How vividly does this call to mind the compassionate sensibility of his younger days, when commanding at Winchester, in Virginia, in time of public peril; and melted to "deadly sorrow" by the "supplicating tears of the women, and moving petitions of the men." As then, he listened to the prompt suggestions of his own heart; and, without awaiting the action of the Convention, issued a proclamation, advising the inhabitants to remove, and requiring the officers and soldiery to aid the helpless and indigent. The Convention soon responded to his appeal, and appointed a committee to effect these purposes in the most humane and expeditious manner.

A gallant little exploit at this juncture gave a fillip to the spirits of the community. Two of the fire-ships recently constructed went up the Hudson to attempt the destruction of the ships which had so long been domineering over its waters. One succeeded in grappling the "Phœnix," and would soon have set her in flames, but in the darkness got to leeward, and was cast loose without effecting any damage. The other, in making for the "Rose," fell foul of one of the tenders, grappled and burned her. The enterprise was conducted with spirit, and though it failed of its main object, had an important effect. The commanders of the ships determined to abandon those waters, where their boats were fired upon by the very yeomanry whenever they attempted to land; and where their ships were in danger from midnight incendiaries while riding at anchor. Taking advantage of a brisk wind and favoring tide, they made all sail early on the morning of the 18th of August, and stood down the river, keeping close under the eastern shore, where they supposed the guns from Mount Washington could not be brought to bear upon them. Notwithstanding this precaution, the

"Phœnix" was thrice hulled by shots from the fort, and one of the tenders once. The "Rose," also, was hulled once by a shot from Burdett's Ferry. The men on board were kept close, to avoid being picked off by a party of riflemen posted on the river bank. The ships fired grape-shot as they passed, but without effecting any injury. Unfortunately, a passage had been left open in the obstructions on which General Putnam had calculated so sanguinely; it was to have been closed in the course of a day or two. Through this they made their way, guided by a deserter; which alone, in Putnam's opinion, saved them from being checked in their career, and utterly destroyed by the batteries.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

The Battle of Long Island

THE movements of the British fleet, and of the camp on Staten Island, gave signs of a meditated attack; but as the nature of that attack was uncertain, Washington was obliged to retain the greater part of his troops in the city for its defense, holding them ready, however, to be transferred to any point in the vicinity. General Mifflin, with about five hundred of the Pennsylvania troops, of Colonels Shee and Magaw's regiments, were at King's Bridge, ready to aid at a moment's notice. "They are the best disciplined of any troops that I have yet seen in the army," said General Heath, who had just reviewed them. General George Clinton was at that post, with about fourteen hundred of his yeomanry of the Hudson. As the "Phœnix" and "Rose" had explored the shores and taken the soundings

as far as they had gone up the river, General Heath thought Howe might attempt an attack somewhere above King's Bridge, rather than in the face of the many and strong works erected in and around the city. "Should his inclination lead him this way," adds he, "nature has done much for us, and we shall, as fast as possible, add the strength of art. We are pushing our works with great diligence." *

Reports from different quarters gave Washington reason to apprehend that the design of the enemy might be to land part of their force on Long Island, and endeavor to get possession of the heights of Brooklyn, which overlooked New York; while another part should land above the city, as General Heath suggested. Thus, various disconnected points, distant from each other, and a great extent of intervening country, had to be defended by raw troops, against a superior force, well disciplined, and possessed of every facility for operating by land and water.

General Greene, with a considerable force, was stationed at Brooklyn. He had acquainted himself with all the localities of the island, from Hell Gate to the Narrows, and made his plan of defense accordingly. His troops were diligently occupied in works which he laid out, about a mile beyond the village of Brooklyn, and facing the interior of the island, whence a land attack might be attempted.

Brooklyn was immediately opposite to New York. The Sound, commonly called the East River, in that place about three-quarters of a mile in width, swept its rapid tides between them. The village stood on a kind of peninsula, formed by the deep inlets of Wallabout Bay on the north, and Gowanus Cove on the south. A line of intrenchments

* Heath to Washington, August 17–18.

and strong redoubts extended across the neck of the peninsula from the bay to a swamp and creek emptying into the cove. To protect the rear of the works from the enemy's ships, a battery was erected at Red Hook, the southwest corner of the peninsula, and a fort on Governor's Island, nearly opposite.

About two miles and a half in front of the line of intrenchments and redoubts a range of hills, densely wooded, extended from southwest to northeast, forming a natural barrier across the island. It was traversed by three roads. One, on the left of the works, stretched eastwardly to Bedford, and then by a pass through the Bedford Hills to the village of Jamaica; another, central and direct, led through the woody heights to Flatbush; a third, on the right of the lines, passed by Gowanus Cove to the Narrows and Gravesend Bay.

The occupation of this range of hills, and the protection of its passes, had been designed by General Greene; but unfortunately, in the midst of his arduous toils, he was taken down by a raging fever, which confined him to his bed; and General Sullivan, just returned from Lake Champlain, had the temporary command.

Washington saw that to prevent the enemy from landing on Long Island would be impossible, its great extent affording so many places favorable for that purpose, and the American works being at the part opposite New York. "However," writes he to the President of Congress, "we shall attempt to harass them as much as possible, which is all that we can do."

On the 21st came a letter, written in all haste by Brigadier-general William Livingston, of New Jersey. Movements of the enemy on Staten Island had been seen from his

camp. He had sent over a spy at midnight, who brought back the following intelligence. Twenty thousand men had embarked to make an attack on Long Island and up the Hudson. Fifteen thousand remained on Staten Island, to attack Bergen Point, Elizabethtown Point, and Amboy. The spy declared that he had heard orders read, and the conversation of the generals. "They appear very determined," added he, "and will put all to the sword!"

Washington sent a copy of the letter to the New York Convention. On the following morning (August 22d) the enemy appeared to be carrying their plans into execution. The reports of cannon and musketry were heard from Long Island, and columns of smoke were descried rising above the groves and orchards at a distance. The city, as usual, was alarmed, and had reason to be so; for word soon came that several thousand men, with artillery and light-horse, were landed at Gravesend; and that Colonel Hand, stationed there with the Pennsylvania rifle regiment, had retreated to the lines, setting fire to stacks of wheat and other articles, to keep them from falling into the enemy's hands.

Washington apprehended an attempt of the foe by a forced march to surprise the lines at Brooklyn. He immediately sent over a re-enforcement of six battalions. It was all that he could spare, as with the next tide the ships might bring up the residue of the army, and attack the city. Five battalions more, however, were ordered to be ready as a re-enforcement, if required. "Be cool, but determined," was the exhortation given to the departing troops. "Do not fire at a distance, but wait the commands of your officers. It is the general's express orders that, if any man attempt to skulk, lie down, or retreat without orders, he be instantly shot down for an example."

In justice to the poor fellows, most of whom were going for the first time on a service of life and death, Washington observes, that "they went off in high spirits," and that the whole, capable of duty, evinced the same cheerfulness.*

Nine thousand of the enemy had landed, with forty pieces of cannon. Sir Henry Clinton had the chief command, and led the first division. His associate officers were the Earls of Cornwallis and Percy, General Grant, and General Sir William Erskine. As their boats approached the shore, Colonel Hand, stationed, as has been said, in the neighborhood with his rifle regiment, retreated to the chain of wooded hills, and took post on a height commanding the central road leading from Flatbush. The enemy having landed without opposition, Lord Cornwallis was detached with the reserve to Flatbush, while the rest of the army extended itself from the ferry at the Narrows through Utrecht and Gravesend, to the village of Flatlands.

Lord Cornwallis, with two battalions of light infantry, Colonel Donop's corps of Hessians, and six field-pieces, advanced rapidly to seize upon the central pass through the hills. He found Hand and his riflemen ready to make a vigorous defense. This brought him to a halt, having been ordered not to risk an attack should the pass be occupied. He took post for the night, therefore, in the village of Flatbush.

It was evidently the aim of the enemy to force the lines at Brooklyn and get possession of the heights. Should they succeed, New York would be at their mercy. The panic and distress of the inhabitants went on increasing. Most of those who could afford it had already removed to the coun-

* Washington to the President of Congress.

try. There was now a new cause of terror. It was rumored that, should the American army retreat from the city, leave would be given for any one to set it on fire. The New York Convention apprised Washington of this rumor. "I can assure you, gentlemen," writes he in reply, "that this report is not founded on the least authority from me. On the contrary, I am so sensible of the value of such a city, and the consequences of its destruction to many worthy citizens and their families, that nothing but the last necessity, and that such as would justify me to the whole world, would induce me to give orders to that purpose."

In this time of general alarm, headquarters were besieged by applicants for safeguard from the impending danger; and Washington was even beset in his walks by supplicating women with their children. The patriot's heart throbbed feelingly under the soldier's belt. Nothing could surpass the patience and benignant sympathy with which he listened to them and endeavored to allay their fears. Again he urged the Convention to carry out their measures for the removal of these defenseless beings. "There are many," writes he, "who anxiously wish to remove, but have not the means."

On the 24th he crossed over to Brooklyn, to inspect the lines and reconnoiter the neighborhood. In this visit he felt sensibly the want of General Greene's presence, to explain his plans and point out the localities.

The American advanced posts were in the wooded hills. Colonel Hand, with his riflemen, kept watch over the central road, and a strong redoubt had been thrown up in front of the pass, to check any advance of the enemy from Flatbush. Another road leading from Flatbush to Bedford, by which the enemy might get round to the left of the works at Brooklyn, was guarded by two regiments, one under Colonel

Williams, posted on the north side of the ridge, the other by a Pennsylvania rifle regiment, under Colonel Miles, posted on the south side. The enemy was stretched along the country beyond the chain of hills.

As yet, nothing had taken place but skirmishing and irregular firing between the outposts. It was with deep concern Washington noticed a prevalent disorder and confusion in the camp. There was a want of system among the officers and co-operation among the troops, each corps seeming to act independently of the rest. Few of the men had any military experience, except, perchance, in bush-fighting with the Indians. Unaccustomed to discipline and the restraint of camps, they sallied forth whenever they pleased, singly or in squads, prowling about and firing upon the enemy, like hunters after game.

Much of this was no doubt owing to the protracted illness of General Greene.

On returning to the city, therefore, Washington gave the command on Long Island to General Putnam, warning him, however, in his letter of instructions, to summon the officers together and enjoin them to put a stop to the irregularities which he had observed among the troops. Lines of defense were to be formed round the encampment, and works on the most advantageous ground. Guards were to be stationed on the lines, with a brigadier of the day constantly at hand to see that orders were executed. Field-officers were to go the rounds and report the situation of the guards, and no one was to pass beyond the lines without a special permit in writing. At the same time, partisan and scouting parties, under proper officers, and with regular license, might sally forth to harass the enemy, and prevent their carrying off the horses and cattle of the country people.

Especial attention was called to the wooded hills between the works and the enemy's camp. The passes through them were to be secured by *abatis* and defended by the best troops, who should, at all hazards, prevent the approach of the enemy. The militia, being the least tutored and experienced, might man the interior works.

Putnam crossed with alacrity to his post. "He was made happy," writes Colonel Reed, "by obtaining leave to go over. The brave old man was quite miserable at being kept here."

In the meantime, the enemy were augmenting their forces on the island. Two brigades of Hessians, under Lieutenant-general de Heister, were transferred from the camp on Staten Island on the 25th. This movement did not escape the vigilant eye of Washington. By the aid of his telescope, he had noticed that from time to time tents were struck on Staten Island, and portions of the encampment broken up; while ship after ship weighed anchor and dropped down to the Narrows.

He now concluded that the enemy were about to make a push with their main force for the possession of Brooklyn Heights. He accordingly sent over additional re-enforcements, and among them Colonel John Haslet's well-equipped and well-disciplined Delaware regiment; which was joined to Lord Stirling's brigade, chiefly composed of Southern troops, and stationed outside of the lines. These were troops which Washington regarded with peculiar satisfaction, on account of their soldier-like appearance and discipline.

On the 26th, he crossed over to Brooklyn, accompanied by Reed, the adjutant-general. There was much movement among the enemy's troops, and their number was evidently augmented. In fact, General de Heister had reached Flat-

bush with his Hessians, and taken command of the center; whereupon Sir Henry Clinton, with the right wing, drew off to Flatlands, in a diagonal line to the right of De Heister, while the left wing, commanded by General Grant, extended to the place of landing on Gravesend Bay.

Washington remained all day aiding General Putnam with his counsels, who, new to the command, had not been able to make himself well acquainted with the fortified posts beyond the lines. In the evening Washington returned to the city, full of anxious thought. A general attack was evidently at hand. Where would it be made? How would his inexperienced troops stand the encounter? What would be the defense of the city, if assailed by the ships? It was a night of intense solicitude, and well might it be; for during that night a plan was carried into effect fraught with disaster to the Americans.

The plan to which we allude was concerted by General Howe, the commander-in-chief. Sir Henry Clinton, with the vanguard, composed of the choicest troops, was, by a circuitous march in the night, to throw himself into the road leading from Jamaica to Bedford, seize upon a pass through the Bedford Hills, within three miles of that village, and thus turn the left of the American advanced posts. It was preparatory to this nocturnal march that Sir Henry during the day had fallen back with his troops from Flatbush to Flatlands, and caused that stir and movement which had attracted the notice of Washington.

To divert the attention of the Americans from this stealthy march on their left, General Grant was to menace their right flank toward Gravesend before daybreak, and General de Heister to cannonade their center, where Colonel Hand was stationed. Neither, however, was to press an attack until

the guns of Sir Henry Clinton should give notice that he had effected his purpose and turned the left flank of the Americans; then the latter were to be assailed at all points with the utmost vigor. About nine o'clock in the evening of the 26th, Sir Henry Clinton began his march from Flatlands with his vanguard, composed of light infantry. Lord Percy followed with the grenadiers, artillery, and light dragoons, forming the center. Lord Cornwallis brought up the rear guard with the heavy ordnance. General Howe accompanied this division.

It was a silent march, without beat of drum or sound of trumpet, under guidance of a Long Island tory, along by-roads traversing a swamp by a narrow causeway, and so across the country to the Jamaica road. About two hours before daybreak they arrived within half a mile of the pass through the Bedford Hills, and halted to prepare for an attack. At this juncture they captured an American patrol, and learned, to their surprise, that the Bedford pass was unoccupied. In fact, the whole road beyond Bedford, leading to Jamaica, had been left unguarded, excepting by some light volunteer troops. Colonels Williams and Miles, who were stationed to the left of Colonel Hand, among the wooded hills, had been instructed to send out parties occasionally to patrol the road, but no troops had been stationed at the Bedford pass. The road and pass may not have been included in General Greene's plan of defense, or may have been thought too far out of the way to need special precaution. The neglect of them, however, proved fatal.

Sir Henry Clinton immediately detached a battalion of light infantry to secure the pass; and, advancing with his corps at the first break of day, possessed himself of the heights. He was now within three miles of Bedford, and

his march had been undiscovered. Having passed the heights, therefore, he halted his division for the soldiers to take some refreshment, preparatory to the morning's hostilities.

There we will leave them, while we note how the other divisions performed their part of the plan.

About midnight General Grant moved from Gravesend Bay, with the left wing, composed of two brigades and a regiment of regulars, a battalion of New York loyalists, and ten field-pieces. He proceeded along the road leading past the Narrows and Gowanus Cove, toward the right of the American works. A picket guard of Pennsylvanian and New York militia, under Colonel Atlee, retired before him fighting to a position on the skirts of the wooded hills.

In the meantime, scouts had brought in word to the American lines that the enemy were approaching in force upon the right. General Putnam instantly ordered Lord Stirling to hasten with the two regiments nearest at hand, and hold them in check. These were Haslet's Delaware and Smallwood's Maryland regiments; the latter the *macaronis*, in scarlet and buff, who had outshone, in camp, their yeoman fellow-soldiers in homespun. They turned out with great alacrity, and Stirling pushed forward with them on the road toward the Narrows. By the time he had passed Gowanus Cove, daylight began to appear. Here, on a rising ground, he met Colonel Atlee with his Pennsylvania Provincials, and learned that the enemy were near. Indeed, their front began to appear in the uncertain twilight. Stirling ordered Atlee to place himself in ambush in an orchard on the left of the road, and await their coming up, while he formed the Delaware and Maryland regiments along a ridge from the road, up to a piece of woods on the top of the hill.

Atlee gave the enemy two or three volleys as they approached, and then retreated and formed in the wood on Lord Stirling's left. By this time his lordship was re-enforced by Kichline's riflemen, part of whom he placed along a hedge at the foot of the hill, and part in front of the wood. General Grant threw his light troops in the advance, and posted them in an orchard and behind hedges, extending in front of the Americans, and about one hundred and fifty yards distant.

It was now broad daylight. A rattling fire commenced between the British light troops and the American riflemen, which continued for about two hours, when the former retired to their main body. In the meantime, Stirling's position had been strengthened by the arrival of Captain Carpenter with two field-pieces. These were placed on the side of the hill so as to command the road and the approach for some hundred yards. General Grant likewise brought up his artillery within three hundred yards, and formed his brigades on opposite hills, about six hundred yards distant. There was occasional cannonading on both sides, but neither party sought a general action.

Lord Stirling's object was merely to hold the enemy in check; and the instructions of General Grant, as we have shown, were not to press an attack until aware that Sir Henry Clinton was on the left flank of the Americans.

During this time, De Heister had commenced his part of the plan by opening a cannonade from his camp at Flatbush, upon the redoubt, at the pass of the wooded hills, where Hand and his riflemen were stationed. On hearing this, General Sullivan, who was within the lines, rode forth to Colonel Hand's post to reconnoiter. De Heister, however, according to the plan of operations, did not advance from

Flatbush, but kept up a brisk fire from his artillery on the redoubt in front of the pass, which replied as briskly. At the same time, a cannonade from a British ship upon the battery at Red Hook contributed to distract the attention of the Americans.

In the meantime, terror reigned in New York. The volleying of musketry and the booming of cannon at early dawn had told of the fighting that had commenced. As the morning advanced, and platoon firing and the occasional discharge of a field-piece were heard in different directions, the terror increased. Washington was still in doubt whether this was but a part of a general attack, in which the city was to be included. Five ships of the line were endeavoring to beat up the bay. Were they to cannonade the city, or to land troops above it? Fortunately, a strong head-wind baffled their efforts; but one vessel of inferior force got up far enough to open the fire already mentioned upon the fort at Red Hook.

Seeing no likelihood of an immediate attack upon the city, Washington hastened over to Brooklyn in his barge, and galloped up to the works. He arrived there in time to witness the catastrophe for which all the movements of the enemy had been concerted.

The thundering of artillery in the direction of Bedford had given notice that Sir Henry had turned the left of the Americans. De Heister immediately ordered Colonel Count Donop to advance with his Hessian regiment and storm the redoubt, while he followed with his whole division. Sullivan did not remain to defend the redoubt. Sir Henry's cannon had apprised him of the fatal truth, that his flank was turned and he in danger of being surrounded. He ordered a retreat to the lines, but it was already too late. Scarce

had he descended from the height and emerged into the plain when he was met by the British light infantry and dragoons and driven back into the woods. By this time De Heister and his Hessians had come up, and now commenced a scene of confusion, consternation, and slaughter, in which the troops under Williams and Miles were involved. Hemmed in and entrapped between the British and Hessians, and driven from one to the other, the Americans fought for a time bravely, or rather desperately. Some were cut down and trampled by the cavalry, others bayoneted without mercy by the Hessians. Some rallied in groups, and made a brief stand with their rifles from rocks or behind trees. The whole pass was a scene of carnage, resounding with the clash of arms, the tramp of horses, the volleying of firearms, and the cries of the combatants, with now and then the dreary braying of the trumpet. We give the words of one who mingled in the fight, and whom we have heard speak with horror of the sanguinary fury with which the Hessians plied the bayonet. At length some of the Americans, by a desperate effort, cut their way through the host of foes, and effected a retreat to the lines, fighting as they went. Others took refuge among the woods and fastnesses of the hills, but a great part were either killed or taken prisoners. Among the latter was General Sullivan.

Washington, as we have observed, arrived in time to witness this catastrophe, but was unable to prevent it. He had heard the din of the battle in the woods, and seen the smoke rising from among the trees; but a deep column of the enemy was descending from the hills on the left; his choicest troops were all in action, and he had none but militia to man the works. His solicitude was now awakened for the safety of Lord Stirling and his corps, who had been all

the morning exchanging cannonades with General Grant. The forbearance of the latter in not advancing, though so superior in force, had been misinterpreted by the Americans. According to Colonel Haslet's statement, the Delawares and Marylanders, drawn up on the side of the hill, "stood upward of four hours with a firm and determined countenance, in close array, their colors flying, the enemy's artillery playing on them all the while, *not daring to advance and attack them*, though six times their number, and nearly surrounding them." *

Washington saw the danger to which these brave fellows were exposed, though they could not. Stationed on a hill within the lines, he commanded, with his telescope, a view of the whole field, and saw the enemy's reserve, under Cornwallis, marching down by a cross-road to get in their rear, and thus place them between two fires. With breathless anxiety he watched the result.

The sound of Sir Henry Clinton's cannon apprised Stirling that the enemy was between him and the lines. General Grant, too, aware that the time had come for earnest action, was closing up, and had already taken Colonel Atlee prisoner. His lordship now thought to effect a circuitous retreat to the lines, by crossing the creek which empties into Gowanus Cove, near what was called the Yellow Mills. There was a bridge and mill-dam, and the creek might be forded at low water, but no time was to be lost, for the tide was rising.

Leaving part of his men to keep face toward General Grant, Stirling advanced with the rest to pass the creek, but was suddenly checked by the appearance of Cornwallis and his grenadiers.

* Atlee to Colonel Rodney. Sparks, iv. 516.

Washington and some of his officers on the hill, who watched every movement, had supposed that Stirling and his troops, finding the case desperate, would surrender in a body, without firing. On the contrary, his lordship boldly attacked Cornwallis with half of Smallwood's battalion, while the rest of his troops retreated across the creek. Washington wrung his hands in agony at the sight. "Good God!" cried he, "what brave fellows I must this day lose!" *

It was, indeed, a desperate fight; and now Smallwood's *macaronis* showed their game spirit. They were repeatedly broken, but as often rallied, and renewed the fight. "We were on the point of driving Lord Cornwallis from his station," writes Lord Stirling, "but large re-enforcements arriving rendered it impossible to do more than provide for safety."

"Being thus surrounded, and no probability of a re-enforcement," writes a Maryland officer, "his lordship ordered me to retreat with the remaining part of our men, and force our way to our camp. We soon fell in with a party of the enemy, who clubbed their firelocks and waved their hats as if they meant to surrender as prisoners; but on our advancing within sixty yards they presented their pieces and fired, which we returned with so much warmth that they soon quitted their post and retired to a large body that was lying in ambuscade." †

The enemy rallied and returned to the combat with additional force. Only five companies of Smallwood's battalion were now in action. There was a warm and close engage-

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* Letter from an American officer. Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 108.

† Letter from a Marylander. Idem, 5th Series, i. 1232.

ment for nearly ten minutes. The struggle became desperate on the part of the Americans. Broken and disordered, they rallied in a piece of woods and made a second attack. They were again overpowered with numbers. Some were surrounded and bayoneted in a field of Indian corn; others joined their comrades who were retreating across the marsh. Lord Stirling had encouraged and animated his young soldiers by his voice and example, but when all was lost, he sought out General de Heister and surrendered himself as his prisoner.

More than two hundred and fifty brave fellows, most of them of Smallwood's regiment, perished in this deadly struggle, within sight of the lines of Brooklyn. That part of the Delaware troops who had first crossed the creek and swamp made good their retreat to the lines with a trifling loss, and entered the camp covered with mud and drenched with water, but bringing with them twenty-three prisoners, and their standard tattered by grape-shot.

The enemy now concentrated their forces within a few hundred yards of the redoubts. The grenadiers were within musket-shot. Washington expected they would storm the works, and prepared for a desperate defense. The discharge of a cannon and volleys of musketry from the part of the lines nearest to them seemed to bring them to a pause.

It was, in truth, the forbearance of the British commander that prevented a bloody conflict. His troops, heated with action and flushed with success, were eager to storm the works; but he was unwilling to risk the loss of life that must attend an assault, when the object might be attained at a cheaper rate by regular approaches. Checking the ardor of his men, therefore, though with some difficulty, he drew them off to a hollow way, in front of the lines, but

out of reach of the musketry, and encamped there for the night.*

The loss of the Americans in this disastrous battle has been variously stated, but is thought in killed, wounded, and prisoners to have been nearly two thousand; a large number, considering that not above five thousand were engaged. The enemy acknowledged a loss of three hundred and eighty killed and wounded.†

The success of the enemy was attributed, in some measure, to the doubt in which Washington was kept as to the nature of the intended attack, and at what point it would chiefly be made. This obliged him to keep a great part of his forces in New York, and to distribute those at Brooklyn over a wide extent of country, and at widely distant places. In fact, he knew not the superior number of the enemy encamped on Long Island, a majority of them having been furtively landed in the night, some days after the debarkation of the first division.

Much of the day's disaster has been attributed, also, to a confusion in the command, caused by the illness of General Greene. Putnam, who had supplied his place in the emergency after the enemy had landed, had not time to make himself acquainted with the post and the surrounding country. Sullivan, though in his letters he professes to have considered himself subordinate to General Putnam within the lines, seems still to have exercised somewhat of an independent command, and to have acted at his own discretion: while Lord Stirling was said to have command of all the troops outside of the works.

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* Gen. Howe to Lord G. Germaine. Rememb., iii. 347.

† Howe states the prisoners at 1,094, and computes the whole American loss at 3,300.

The fatal error, however, and one probably arising from all these causes, consisted in leaving the passes through the wooded hills too weakly fortified and guarded; and especially in neglecting the eastern road, by which Sir Henry Clinton got in the rear of the advanced troops, cut them off from the lines, and subjected them to a cross fire of his own men and De Heister's Hessians.

This able and fatal scheme of the enemy might have been thwarted had the army been provided with a few troops of light-horse, to serve as videttes. With these to scour the roads and bring intelligence, the night march of Sir Henry Clinton, so decisive of the fortunes of the day, could hardly have failed to be discovered and reported. The Connecticut horsemen, therefore, ridiculed by the Southerners for their homely equipments, sneered at as useless, and dismissed for standing on their dignity and privileges as troopers, might, if retained, have saved the army from being surprised and severed, its advanced guards routed, and those very Southern troops cut up, captured, and almost annihilated.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Retreat from Long Island

THE night after the battle was a weary, yet almost sleepless one to the Americans. Fatigued, dispirited, many of them sick and wounded, yet they were, for the most part, without tent or other shelter. To Washington it was a night of anxious vigil. Everything boded a close and deadly conflict. The enemy had pitched a number of tents about a mile distant. Their sentries were but a quarter of a mile off, and close to the American sentries. At four o'clock in

the morning, Washington went the round of the works to see that all was right, and to speak words of encouragement. The morning broke lowering and dreary. Large encampments were gradually descried; to appearance, the enemy were twenty thousand strong. As the day advanced, their ordnance began to play upon the works. They were proceeding to intrench themselves, but were driven into their tents by a drenching rain.

Early in the morning General Mifflin arrived in camp with part of the troops which had been stationed at Fort Washington and King's Bridge. He brought with him Shee's prime Philadelphia regiment, and Magaw's Pennsylvania regiment, both well disciplined and officered, and accustomed to act together. They were so much reduced in numbers, however, by sickness, that they did not amount, in the whole, to more than eight hundred men. With Mifflin came also Colonel Glover's Massachusetts regiment, composed chiefly of Marblehead fishermen and sailors, hardy, adroit, and weather-proof; trimly clad in blue jackets and trousers. The detachment numbered, in the whole, about thirteen hundred men, all fresh and full of spirits. Every eye brightened as they marched briskly along the line with alert step and cheery aspect. They were posted at the left extremity of the intrenchments toward the Wallabout.

There were skirmishes throughout the day between the riflemen on the advanced posts and the British "irregulars," which at times were quite severe; but no decided attack was attempted. The main body of the enemy kept within their tents until the latter part of the day; when they began to break ground at about five hundred yards distance from the works, as if preparing to carry them by regular approaches.

On the 29th, there was a dense fog over the island, that

wrapped everything in mystery. In the course of the morning, General Mifflin, with Adjutant-general Reed and Colonel Grayson of Virginia, one of Washington's aides-de-camp, rode to the western outposts in the neighborhood of Red Hook. While they were there, a light breeze lifted the fog from a part of the New York Bay, and revealed the British ships at their anchorage opposite Staten Island. There appeared to be an unusual bustle among them. Boats were passing to and from the admiral's ship, as if seeking or carrying orders. Some movement was apparently in agitation. The idea occurred to the reconnoitering party that the fleet was preparing, should the wind hold and the fog clear away, to come up the bay at the turn of the tide, silence the feeble batteries at Red Hook and the city, and anchor in the East River. In that case the army on Long Island would be completely surrounded and entrapped.

Alarmed at this perilous probability, they spurred back to headquarters, to urge the immediate withdrawal of the army. As this might not be acceptable advice, Reed, emboldened by his intimacy with the commander-in-chief, undertook to give it. Washington instantly summoned a council of war. The difficulty was already apparent of guarding such extensive works with troops fatigued and dispirited, and exposed to the inclemencies of the weather. Other dangers now presented themselves. Their communication with New York might be cut off by the fleet from below. Other ships had passed round Long Island, and were at Flushing Bay, on the Sound. These might land troops on the east side of Harlem River, and make themselves masters of King's Bridge; that key of Manhattan Island. Taking all these things into consideration, it was resolved to cross with the troops to the city that very night.

Never did retreat require greater secrecy and circumspection. Nine thousand men, with all the munitions of war, were to be withdrawn from before a victorious army, encamped so near that every stroke of spade and pickax from their trenches could be heard. The retreating troops, moreover, were to be embarked and conveyed across a strait three-quarters of a mile wide, swept by rapid tides. The least alarm of their movement would bring the enemy upon them, and produce a terrible scene of confusion and carnage at the place of embarkation.

Washington made the preparatory arrangements with great alertness, yet profound secrecy.

Verbal orders were sent to Colonel Hughes, who acted as quartermaster-general, to impress all water craft, large and small, from Spyt den Duivel on the Hudson round to Hell Gate on the Sound, and have them on the east side of the city by evening. The order was issued at noon, and so promptly executed, that, although some of the vessels had to be brought a distance of fifteen miles, they were all at Brooklyn at eight o'clock in the evening, and put under the management of Colonel Glover's amphibious Marblehead regiment.

To prepare the army for a general movement without betraying the object, orders were issued for the troops to hold themselves in readiness for a night attack upon the enemy. The orders caused surprise, for the poor fellows were exhausted, and their arms rendered nearly useless by the rain; all, however, prepared to obey; but several made nuncupative wills; as is customary among soldiers on the eve of sudden and deadly peril.

According to Washington's plan of retreat, to keep the enemy from discovering the withdrawal of the Americans

until the main body should have embarked in the boats and pushed off from the shore, General Mifflin was to remain at the lines with his Pennsylvania troops and the gallant remains of Haslet, Smallwood, and Hand's regiments, with guards posted and sentinels alert, as if nothing extraordinary was taking place; when the main embarkation was effected, they were themselves to move off quietly, march briskly to the ferry, and embark. In case of any alarm that might disconcert the arrangements, Brooklyn church was to be the rallying-place, whither all should repair, so as unitedly to resist any attack.

It was late in the evening when the troops began to retire from the breastworks. As one regiment quietly withdrew from their station on guard, the troops on the right and left moved up and filled the vacancy. There was a stifled murmur in the camp, unavoidable in a movement of the kind; but it gradually died away in the direction of the river, as the main body moved on in silence and order. The youthful Hamilton, whose military merits had won the favor of General Greene, and who had lost his baggage and a field-piece in the battle, brought up the rear of the retreating party. In the dead of the night, and in the midst of this hushed and anxious movement, a cannon went off with a tremendous roar. "The effect," says an American who was present, "was at once alarming and sublime. If the explosion was within our lines, the gun was probably discharged in the act of spiking it, and could have been no less a matter of speculation to the enemy than to ourselves." *

"What with the greatness of the stake, the darkness of the night, the uncertainty of the design, and the extreme

* Graydon's Memoirs, edited by I. S. Littell, p. 167.

hazard of the issue," adds the same writer, "it would be difficult to conceive a more deeply solemn and interesting scene."

The meaning of this midnight gun was never ascertained; fortunately, though it startled the Americans, it failed to rouse the British camp.

In the meantime the embarkation went on with all possible dispatch, under the vigilant eye of Washington, who stationed himself at the ferry, superintending every movement. In his anxiety for dispatch, he sent back Colonel Scammel, one of his aides-de-camp, to hasten forward all the troops that were on the march. Scammel blundered in executing his errand, and gave the order to Mifflin likewise. The general instantly called in his pickets and sentinels, and set off for the ferry.

By this time the tide had turned; there was a strong wind from the northeast; the boats with oars were insufficient to convey the troops; those with sails could not make headway against the wind and tide. There was some confusion at the ferry, and in the midst of it General Mifflin came down with the whole covering party; adding to the embarrassment and uproar.

"Good God! General Mifflin!" cried Washington, "I am afraid you have ruined us by so unseasonably withdrawing the troops from the lines."

"I did so by your order," replied Mifflin with some warmth. "It cannot be!" exclaimed Washington. "By G—, I did!" was the blunt rejoinder. "Did Scammel act as aid-de-camp for the day or did he not?" "He did." "Then," said Mifflin, "I had orders through him." "It is a dreadful mistake," rejoined Washington, "and unless the troops can regain the lines before their absence is discov-

ered by the enemy the most disastrous consequences are to be apprehended."

Mifflin led back his men to the lines, which had been completely deserted for three-quarters of an hour. Fortunately, the dense fog had prevented the enemy from discovering that they were unoccupied. The men resumed their former posts, and remained at them until called off to cross the ferry. "Whoever has seen troops in a similar situation," writes General Heath, "or duly contemplates the human heart in such trials, will know how to appreciate the conduct of these brave men on this occasion."

The fog which prevailed all this time seemed almost providential. While it hung over Long Island and concealed the movements of the Americans, the atmosphere was clear on the New York side of the river. The adverse wind, too, died away, the river became so smooth that the rowboats could be laden almost to the gunwale; and a favoring breeze sprang up for the sailboats. The whole embarkation of troops, artillery, ammunition, provisions, cattle, horses, and carts, was happily effected, and by daybreak the greater part had safely reached the city, thanks to the aid of Glover's Marblehead men. Scarce anything was abandoned to the enemy, excepting a few heavy pieces of artillery. At a proper time, Mifflin, with his covering party, left the lines, and effected a silent retreat to the ferry. Washington, though repeatedly entreated, refused to enter a boat until all the troops were embarked; and crossed the river with the last.

A Long Island tradition tells how the British camp became aware of the march which had been stolen upon it.*

* Hist. Long Island, p. 258.

Near the ferry resided a Mrs. Rapelye, whose husband, suspected of favoring the enemy, had been removed to the interior of New Jersey. On seeing the embarkation of the first detachment, she, out of loyalty or revenge, sent off a black servant to inform the first British officer he could find of what was going on. The negro succeeded in passing the American sentinels, but arrived at a Hessian outpost, where he could not make himself understood, and was put under guard as a suspicious person. There he was kept until daybreak, when an officer, visiting the post, examined him, and was astounded by his story. An alarm was given, the troops were called to arms; Captain Montressor, aid-de-camp of General Howe, followed by a handful of men, climbed cautiously over the crest of the works and found them deserted. Advanced parties were hurried down to the ferry. The fog had cleared away sufficiently for them to see the rear boats of the retreating army half-way across the river. One boat, still within musket-shot, was compelled to return; it was manned by three vagabonds, who had lingered behind to plunder.

This extraordinary retreat, which, in its silence and celerity, equaled the midnight fortifying of Bunker's Hill, was one of the most signal achievements of the war, and redounded greatly to the reputation of Washington, who, we are told, for forty-eight hours preceding the safe extricating of his army from their perilous situation, scarce closed his eyes, and was the greater part of the time on horseback. Many, however, who considered the variety of risks and dangers which surrounded the camp, and the apparently fortuitous circumstances which averted them all, were disposed to attribute the safe retreat of the patriot army to a peculiar Providence.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Long Island in Possession of the Enemy—Distressed Situation of the American Army at New York—Question of Abandoning the City—Letters from either Camp—Enemy's Ships in the Sound—Removal of Women and Children from the City—Yearning for Home among the Militia—Tolerant Ideas of Washington and Greene—Fort Constitution—Conference of Lord Howe with a Committee from Congress

THE enemy had now possession of Long Island. British and Hessian troops garrisoned the works at Brooklyn, or were distributed at Bushwick, Newtown, Hell Gate, and Flushing. Admiral Howe came up with the main body of the fleet, and anchored close to Governor's Island, within cannon-shot of the city.

"Our situation is truly distressing," writes Washington to the President of Congress, on the 2d of September. "The check our detachment sustained on the 27th ultimo has dispirited too great a proportion of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair. The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable, and impatient to return. Great numbers of them have gone off; in some instances almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies, at a time. . . . With the deepest concern, I am obliged to confess my want of confidence in the generality of the troops. . . . Our number of men at present fit for duty is under twenty thousand. I have ordered General Mercer to send the men intended for

the flying camp to this place, about a thousand in number, and to try with the militia, if practicable, to make a diversion upon Staten Island. Till of late, I had no doubt in my own mind of defending this place; nor should I have yet if the men would do their duty, but this I despair of.

"If we should be obliged to abandon the town, ought it to stand as winter quarters for the enemy? They would derive great conveniences from it, on the one hand, and much property would be destroyed, on the other. It is an important question, but will admit of but little time for deliberation. At present, I dare say the enemy mean to preserve it if they can. If Congress, therefore, should resolve upon the destruction of it, the resolution should be a profound secret, as the knowledge will make a capital change in their plans."

Colonel Reed, writing on the same day to his wife, says, "I have only time to say that I am alive and well; as to spirits, but middling. . . . My country will, I trust, yet be free, whatever may be our fate who are cooped up, or are in danger of so being, on this tongue of land, where we ought never to have been." *

We turn to cite letters of the very same date from British officers on Long Island, full of rumors and surmises. "I have just heard," writes an English field-officer, "there has been a most dreadful fray in the town of New York. The New Englanders insisted on setting the town on fire, and retreating. This was opposed by the New Yorkers, who were joined by the Pennsylvanians, and a battle has been the consequence, in which many have lost their lives. By the steps our general is taking, I imagine he will effectually

* Force's American Archives, 5th Series, ii. 123.

cut off their retreat at King's Bridge, by which the island of New York is joined to the continent."

An English officer of the guards, writing from camp on the same day, varies the rumor. The Pennsylvanians, according to his version, joined with the New Englanders in the project to set fire to the town; both had a battle with the New Yorkers on the subject, and then withdrew themselves from the city—which, "with other favorable circumstances," gave the latter writer a lively "hope that this distressful business would soon be brought to a happy issue."

Another letter gives a different version. "In the night of the 2d instant, three persons escaped from the city in a canoe, and informed our general that Mr. Washington had ordered three battalions of New York Provincials to leave New York, and that they should be replaced by an equal number of Connecticut troops; but the former, assured that the Connecticutians would burn and destroy all the houses, peremptorily refused to give up their city, declaring that no cause of exigency whatever should induce them to intrust the defense of it to any other than her own inhabitants. This stubborn and spirited resolution prevailed over the order of their commander, and the New Yorkers continue snugly in possession of that place." *

"Matters go on swimmingly," writes another officer. "I don't doubt the next news we send you is that New York is ours, though in ashes, for the rebel troops have vowed to put it in flames if the tory troops get over."

An American officer writes to an absent New Yorker in a different tone. "I hear we shall evacuate your poor city. The very thought gives me the horrors!" Still he indulges

* Force's Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 168.

a vague hope of succor from General Lee, who was returning, all glorious, from his successes at the South. "General Lee," writes he, "is hourly expected, as if from heaven—with a legion of flaming swordsmen." It was, however, what Lee himself would have termed a mere *brutum fulmen.*

These letters show the state of feeling in the opposite camps, at this watchful moment, when matters seemed hurrying to a crisis.

On the night of Monday (Sept. 2d), a forty-gun ship, taking advantage of a favorable wind and tide, passed between Governor's Island and Long Island, swept unharmed by the batteries which opened upon her, and anchored in Turtle Bay, above the city. In the morning, Washington dispatched Major Crane, of the artillery, with two twelve-pounders and a howitzer, to annoy her from the New York shore. They hulled her several times, and obliged her to take shelter behind Blackwell's Island. Several other ships of war, with transports and store-ships, had made their appearance in the upper part of the Sound, having gone round Long Island.

As the city might speedily be attacked, Washington caused all the sick and wounded to be conveyed to Orangetown, in the Jerseys, and such military stores and baggage as were not immediately needed to be removed, as fast as conveyances could be procured, to a port partially fortified at Dobb's Ferry, on the eastern bank of the Hudson, about twenty-two miles above the city.

Reed, in his letters to his wife, talks of the dark and mysterious motions of the enemy, and the equally dark and intricate councils of Congress, by which the army were disheartened and perplexed. "We are still here," writes he

on the 6th, "in a posture somewhat awkward; we think (at least I do) that we cannot stay, and yet we do not know how to go, so that we may be properly said to be between hawk and buzzard."

The "shameful and scandalous desertions," as Washington termed them, continued. In a few days the Connecticut militia dwindled down from six to less than two thousand. "The impulse for going home was so irresistible," writes he, "that it answered no purpose to oppose it. Though I would not discharge them, I have been obliged to acquiesce."

Still his considerate mind was tolerant of their defection. "Men," said he, "accustomed to unbounded freedom, cannot brook the restraint which is indispensably necessary to the good order and government of an army." And again, "Men just dragged from the tender scenes of domestic life, unaccustomed to the din of arms, totally unacquainted with every kind of military skill (which is followed by a want of confidence in themselves, when opposed to troops regularly trained, superior in knowledge, and superior in arms), are timid and ready to fly from their own shadows. Besides, the sudden change in their manner of living brings on an unconquerable desire to return to their homes."

Greene, also, who coincided so much with Washington in opinions and sentiments, observes: "People coming from home with all the tender feelings of domestic life are not sufficiently fortified with natural courage to stand the shocking scenes of war. To march over dead men, to hear without concern the groans of the wounded—I say few men can stand such scenes unless steeled by habit or fortified by military pride."

Nor was this ill-timed yearning for home confined to the yeomanry of Connecticut, who might well look back to their

humble farms, where they had left the plow standing in the furrow, and where everything might go to ruin, and their family to want in their absence. Some of the gentlemen volunteers from beyond the Delaware who had made themselves merry at the expense of the rustic soldiery of New England, were likewise among the first to feel the homeward impulse. "When I look around," said Reed, the adjutant-general, "and see how few of the numbers who talked so loudly of death and honor are around me, I am lost in wonder and surprise. Some of our Philadelphia gentlemen who came over on visits, upon the first cannon went off in almost violent hurry. Your noisy sons of liberty are, I find, the quietest on the field." *

Present experience induced Washington to reiterate the opinion he had repeatedly expressed to Congress, that little reliance was to be placed on militia enlisted for short periods. The only means of protecting the national liberties from great hazard, if not utter loss, was, he said, an army enlisted for the war.

The thousand men ordered from the flying camp were furnished by General Mercer. They were Maryland troops under Colonels Griffith and Richardson, and were a seasonable addition to his effective forces; but the ammunition carried off by the disbanding militia was a serious loss at this critical juncture.

A work had been commenced on the Jersey shore opposite Fort Washington, to aid in protecting Putnam's chevaux-de-frise which had been sunk between them. This work had received the name of Fort Constitution (a name already borne by one of the forts in the Highlands). Troops were

* Life of Reed, i. 231.

drawn from the flying camp to make a strong encampment in the vicinity of the fort, with an able officer to command it, and a skillful engineer to strengthen the works. It was hoped, by the co-operation of these opposite forts and the chevaux-de-frise, to command the Hudson, and prevent the passing and repassing of hostile ships.

The British, in the meantime, forbore to press further hostilities. Lord Howe was really desirous of a peaceful adjustment of the strife between the colonies and the mother country, and supposed this a propitious moment for a new attempt at pacification. He accordingly sent off General Sullivan on parole, charged with an overture to Congress. In this he declared himself empowered and disposed to compromise the dispute between Great Britain and America, on the most favorable terms, and though he could not treat with Congress as a legally organized body, he was desirous of a conference with some of its members. These, for the time, he should consider only as private gentlemen, but if in the conference any probable scheme of accommodation should be agreed upon, the authority of Congress would afterward be acknowledged, to render the compact complete.*

The message caused some embarrassment in Congress. To accede to the interview might seem to waive the question of independence; to decline it, was to shut the door on all hope of conciliation, and might alienate the co-operation of some worthy whigs, who still clung to that hope. After much debate, Congress, on the 5th of September, replied that, being the representatives of the free and independent States of America, they could not send any members to confer with his lordship in their private characters, but that,

* Civil War, vol. i., p. 190.

ever desirous of establishing peace on reasonable terms, they would send a committee of their body to ascertain what authority he had to treat with persons authorized by Congress, and what propositions he had to offer.

A committee was chosen on the 6th of September, composed of John Adams, Edward Rutledge, and Dr. Franklin. The latter, in the preceding year, during his residence in England, had become acquainted with Lord Howe at the house of his lordship's sister, the Honorable Mrs. Howe, and they had held frequent conversations on the subject of American affairs, in the course of which his lordship had intimated the possibility of his being sent commissioner to settle the differences in America.

Franklin had recently adverted to this in a letter to Lord Howe. "Your lordship may possibly remember the tears of joy that wet my cheek, when, at your good sister's in London, you gave me expectations that a reconciliation might soon take place. I had the misfortune to find these expectations disappointed.

. . . . . .

"The well-founded esteem, and, permit me to say, affection, which I shall always have for your lordship, makes it painful for me to see you engaged in conducting a war, the great ground of which, as expressed in your letter, is 'the necessity of preventing the American trade from passing into foreign channels.' . . . I know your great motive in coming hither was the hope of being instrumental in a reconciliation; and I believe that when you find *that* impossible on any terms given to you to propose, you will relinquish so odious a command, and return to a more honorable private station."

"I can have no difficulty to acknowledge," replied Lord

Howe, "that the powers I am invested with were never calculated to negotiate a reunion with America, under any other description than as subject to the crown of Great Britain. But I do esteem these powers competent, not only to confer and negotiate with any gentlemen of influence in the colonies upon the terms, but also to effect a lasting peace and reunion between the two countries, were the tempers of the colonies such as professed in the last petition of Congress to the king." *

A hope of the kind lingered in the breast of his lordship when he sought the proposed conference. It was to take place on the 11th, at a house on Staten Island opposite to Amboy; at which latter place the veteran Mercer was stationed with his flying camp. At Amboy the committee found Lord Howe's barge waiting to receive them; with a British officer of rank, who was to remain within the American lines during their absence, as a hostage. This guarantee of safety was promptly declined, and the parties crossed together to Staten Island. The admiral met them on their landing, and conducted them through his guards to his house.

On opening the conference, his lordship again intimated that he could not treat with them as a committee of Congress, but only confer with them as private gentlemen of influence in the colonies on the means of restoring peace between the two countries.

The commissioners replied that as their business was to hear, he might consider them in what light he pleased; but that they should consider themselves in no other character than that in which they were placed by order of Congress.

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* Franklin's Writings, v. 103.

Lord Howe then entered into a discourse of considerable length, but made no explicit proposition of peace, nor promise of redress of grievances, excepting on condition that the colonies should return to their allegiance.

This, the commissioners replied, was not now to be expected. Their repeated humble petitions to the king and Parliament having been treated with contempt, and answered by additional injuries, and war having been declared against them, the colonies had declared their independence, and it was not in the power of Congress to agree for them that they should return to their former dependent state.*

His lordship expressed his sorrow that no accommodation was likely to take place; and, on breaking up the conference, assured his old friend, Dr. Franklin, that he should suffer great pain in being obliged to distress those for whom he had so much regard.

"I feel thankful to your lordship for your regard," replied Franklin, good-humoredly; "the Americans, on their part, will endeavor to lessen the pain you may feel by taking good care of themselves."

The result of this conference had a beneficial effect. It showed that his lordship had no power but what was given by the act of Parliament; and put an end to the popular notion that he was vested with secret powers to negotiate an adjustment of grievances.

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* Report of the Comm. to Congress, Sept. 13, 1776.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Movements of the Enemy—Councils of War—Question of the Abandonment of the City—Distribution of the Army—Ships in the East River—The Enemy at Hell Gate—Skirmish at Turtle Bay—Panic of the Connecticut Militia—Rage and Personal Peril of Washington—Putnam's Perilous Retreat from the City—British Regale at Murray Hill

SINCE the retreat from Brooklyn, Washington had narrowly watched the movements of the enemy to discover their further plans. Their whole force, excepting about four thousand men, had been transferred from Staten to Long Island. A great part was encamped on the peninsula between Newtown Inlet and Flushing Bay. A battery had been thrown up near the extremity of the peninsula, to check an American battery at Horen's Hook opposite, and to command the mouth of Harlem River. Troops were subsequently stationed on the islands about Hell Gate. "It is evident," writes Washington, "the enemy mean to inclose us on the island of New York, by taking post in our rear, while the shipping secures the front, and thus by cutting off our communication with the country oblige us to fight them on their own terms, or surrender at discretion; or by a brilliant stroke endeavor to cut this army in pieces, and secure the collection of arms and stores, which, they well know, we shall not be able soon to replace."*

The question was, how could their plans be most success-

* Letter to the President of Congress.

fully opposed? On every side he saw a choice of difficulties; every measure was to be formed with some apprehension that all the troops would not do their duty. History, experience, the opinion of able friends in Europe, the fears of the enemy, even the declarations of Congress, all concurred in demonstrating that the war on the American side should be defensive; a war of posts; that, on all occasions, a general action should be avoided, and nothing put at risk unnecessarily. "With these views," said Washington, "and being fully persuaded that it would be presumption to draw out our young troops into open ground against their superiors, both in number and discipline, I have never spared the spade and pickax."

In a council of war, held on the 7th of September, the question was discussed, whether the city should be defended or evacuated. All admitted that it would not be tenable, should it be cannonaded and bombarded. Several of the council, among whom was General Putnam, were for a total and immediate removal from the city; urging that one part of the army might be cut off before the other could support it; the extremities being at least sixteen miles apart; and the whole, when collected, being inferior to the enemy. By removing, they would deprive the enemy of the advantage of their ships; they would keep them at bay; put nothing at hazard; keep the army together to be recruited another year, and preserve the unspent stores and the heavy artillery. Washington himself inclined to this opinion. Others, however, were unwilling to abandon a place which had been fortified with great cost and labor, and seemed defensible; and which, by some, had been considered the key to the northern country; it might dispirit the troops and enfeeble the cause. General Mercer, who was prevented by illness

from attending the council, communicated his opinion by letter. "We should keep New York if possible," said he, "as the acquiring of it will give eclat to the arms of Great Britain, afford the soldiers good quarters, and furnish a safe harbor for the fleet."

General Greene, also, being still unwell, conveyed his opinion in a letter to Washington, dated September 5th. He advised that the army should abandon the city and island, and post itself at King's Bridge and along the Westchester shore. That there was no object to be obtained by holding any position below King's Bridge. The enemy might throw troops on Manhattan Island from their camps on Long Island, and their ships on the Hudson, and form an intrenched line across it between the city and the middle division of the army, and support the two flanks of the line by their shipping. In such case it would be necessary to fight them on disadvantageous terms, or submit.

The city and island, he observed, were objects not to be put in competition with the general interests of America. Two-thirds of the city and suburbs belonged to tories; there was no great reason, therefore, to run any considerable risk in its defense. The honor and interests of America required a general and speedy retreat. But as the enemy, once in possession, could never be dislodged without a superior naval force; as the place would furnish them with excellent winter quarters and barrack room and an abundant market, he advised to burn both city and suburbs before retreating.*

Well might the poor, harassed citizens feel hysterical, threatened as they were by sea and land, and their very defenders debating the policy of burning their houses over their

* Force's Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 182.

heads. Fortunately for them, Congress had expressly forbidden that any harm should be done to New York, trusting that, though the enemy might occupy it for a time, it would ultimately be regained.

After much discussion, a middle course was adopted. Putnam, with five thousand men, was to be stationed in the city. Heath, with nine thousand, was to keep guard on the upper part of the island, and oppose any attempt of the enemy to land. His troops, among whom were Magaw's, Shee's, Hand's, and Miles's Pennsylvanian battalions, and Haslet's Delaware regiment, were posted about King's Bridge and its vicinity.

The third division, composed principally of militia, was under the command of Generals Greene and Spencer, the former of whom, however, was still unwell. It was stationed about the center of the island, chiefly along Turtle Bay and Kip's Bay, where strong works had been thrown up, to guard against any landing of troops from the ships or from the encampments on Long Island. It was also to hold itself ready to support either of the other divisions. Washington himself had his headquarters at a short distance from the city. A resolution of Congress, passed the 10th of September, left the occupation or abandonment of the city entirely at Washington's discretion. Nearly the whole of his officers, too, in a second council of war, retracted their former opinion, and determined that the removal of his army was not only prudent, but absolutely necessary. Three members of the council, however, Generals Spencer, Heath and George Clinton, tenaciously held to the former decision.

Convinced of the propriety of evacuation, Washington prepared for it by ordering the removal of all stores, excepting such as were indispensable for the subsistence of the

troops while they remained. A letter from a Rhode Island officer, on a visit to New York, gives an idea of its agitations. "On the 13th of September, just after dinner, three frigates and a forty-gun ship sailed up the East River with a gentle breeze, toward Hell Gate, and kept up an incessant fire, assisted by the cannon at Governor's Island. The batteries of the city returned the ships the like salutation. Three men agape, idle spectators, had the misfortune of being killed by one cannon-ball. One shot struck within six feet of General Washington as he was on horseback, riding into the fort." *

On the 14th, Washington's baggage was removed to King's Bridge, whither headquarters were to be transferred the same evening; it being clear that the enemy were preparing to encompass him on the island. "It is now a trial of skill whether they will or not," writes Colonel Reed, "and every night we lie down with the most anxious fears for the fate of to-morrow." †

About sunset of the same day, six more ships, two of them men-of war, passed up the Sound and joined those above. Within half an hour came expresses spurring to headquarters, one from Mifflin at King's Bridge, the other from Colonel Sargent at Horen's Hook. Three or four thousand of the enemy were crossing at Hell Gate to the islands at the mouth of Harlem River, where numbers were already encamped. An immediate landing at Harlem, or Morrisania, was apprehended. Washington was instantly in the saddle, spurring to Harlem Heights. The night, however, passed away quietly. In the morning the enemy

* Col. Babcock to Governor Cooke. Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 443.

† Reed to Mrs. Reed.

commenced operations. Three ships of war stood up the Hudson, "causing a most tremendous firing, assisted by the cannons of Governor's Island, which firing was returned from the city as well as the scarcity of heavy cannon would allow." * The ships anchored opposite Bloomingdale, a few miles above the city, and put a stop to the removal by water of stores and provisions to Dobbs' Ferry. About eleven o'clock the ships in the East River commenced a heavy cannonade upon the breastworks between Turtle Bay and the city. At the same time two divisions of the troops encamped on Long Island, one British, under Sir Henry Clinton, and the other Hessian, under Colonel Donop, emerged in boats from the deep, woody recesses of Newtown Inlet, and, under cover of the fire from the ships, began to land at two points between Turtle and Kip's Bays. The breastworks were manned by militia who had recently served at Brooklyn. Disheartened by their late defeat, they fled at the first advance of the enemy. Two brigades of Putnam's Connecticut troops (Parsons' and Fellows') which had been sent that morning to support them, caught the panic, and, regardless of the commands and entreaties of their officers, joined in the general scamper.

At this moment Washington, who had mounted his horse at the first sound of the cannonade, came galloping to the scene of confusion; riding in among the fugitives, he endeavored to rally and restore them to order. All in vain. At the first appearance of sixty or seventy red coats, they broke again without firing a shot and fled in headlong terror. Losing all self-command at the sight of such dastardly conduct, he dashed his hat upon the ground in a transport of

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* Letter of Col. Babcock to Gov. Cooke.

rage. "Are these the men," exclaimed he, "with whom I am to defend America!" In a paroxysm of passion and despair he snapped his pistols at some of them, threatening others with his sword, and was so heedless of his own danger that he might have fallen into the hands of the enemy, who were not eighty yards distant, had not an aid-de-camp seized the bridle of his horse and absolutely hurried him away.*

It was one of the rare moments of his life when the vehement element of his nature was stirred up from its deep recesses. He soon recovered his self-possession, and took measures against the general peril. The enemy might land another force about Hell Gate, seize upon Harlem Heights, the strong central portion of the island, cut off all retreat of the lower divisions, and effectually sever his army. In all haste, therefore, he sent off an express to the forces encamped above, directing them to secure that position immediately; while another express to Putnam ordered an immediate retreat from the city to those heights.

It was indeed a perilous moment. Had the enemy followed up their advantage and seized upon the heights before thus occupied, or had they extended themselves across the island, from the place where they had effected a landing, the result might have been most disastrous to the Americans. Fortunately, they contented themselves for the present with sending a strong detachment down the road along the East

* Graydon's Memoirs, Littell's edition, p. 174. General Greene, in a letter to a friend, writes: "We made a miserable, disorderly retreat from New York, owing to the conduct of the militia, who ran at the appearance of the enemy's advanced guard. Fellows' and Parsons' brigades ran away from about fifty men, and left his Excellency on the ground, within eighty yards of the enemy, so vexed at the infamous conduct of his troops that he sought death rather than life."

River, leading to the city, while the main body, British and Hessians, rested on their arms.

In the meantime, Putnam, on receiving Washington's express, called in his pickets and guards, and abandoned the city in all haste, leaving behind him a large quantity of provisions and military stores, and most of the heavy cannon. To avoid the enemy, he took the Bloomingdale road, though this exposed him to be raked by the enemy's ships anchored in the Hudson. It was a forced march, on a sultry day, under a burning sun and amid clouds of dust. His army was encumbered with women and children and all kinds of baggage. Many were overcome by fatigue and thirst, some perished by hastily drinking cold water; but Putnam rode backward and forward, hurrying every one on.

Colonel Humphreys, at that time a volunteer in his division, writes: "I had frequent opportunities that day of beholding him for the purpose of issuing orders and encouraging the troops, flying on his horse covered with foam wherever his presence was most necessary. Without his extraordinary exertions the guards must have been inevitably lost, and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces.

"When we were not far from Bloomingdale, an aid-de-camp came to him at full speed, to inform him that a column of British infantry was descending upon our right. Our rear was soon fired upon, and the colonel of our regiment, whose order was just communicated for the front to file off to the left, was killed upon the spot. With no other loss, we joined the army after dark upon the heights of Harlem." *

Tradition gives a circumstance which favored Putnam's

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* Peabody, Life of Putnam. Sparks' American Biog., vii. 189.

retreat. The British generals, in passing by Murray Hill, the country residence of a patriot of that name who was of the Society of Friends, made a halt to seek some refreshment. The proprietor of the house was absent; but his wife set cake and wine before them in abundance. So grateful were these refreshments in the heat of the day that they lingered over their wine, quaffing and laughing and bantering their patriotic hostess about the ludicrous panic and discomfiture of her countrymen. In the meantime, before they were roused from their regale, Putnam and his forces had nearly passed by, within a mile of them. All the loss sustained by him in his perilous retreat was fifteen killed, and about three hundred taken prisoners. It became, adds the tradition, a common saying among the American officers that Mrs. Murray saved Putnam's division of the army.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Fortified Camp at King's Bridge—American and British Lines—The Morris House—Alexander Hamilton—The Enemy Advance—Successful Skirmish—Death of Knowlton—Great Fire in New York—Reorganization of the Army—Exchange of Prisoners—Daniel Morgan Regained—Delancey's Tory Brigade—Robert Rogers, the Partisan—His Rangers—The "Roebuck," "Phœnix" and "Tartar" in the Hudson—Military Movements by Land and Water—Letter of John Jay

THE fortified camp, where the main body of the army was now assembled, was upon that neck of land several miles long, and for the most part not above a mile wide, which forms the upper part of Manhattan or New York Isl-

* Thacher's Military Journal, p. 70.

and. It forms a chain of rocky heights, and is separated from the mainland by Harlem River, a narrow strait, extending from Hell Gate on the Sound, to Spyt den Duivel, a creek or inlet of the Hudson. Fort Washington occupied the crest of one of the rocky heights above mentioned, overlooking the Hudson, and about two miles north of it was King's Bridge, crossing Spyt den Duivel Creek, and forming at that time the only pass from Manhattan Island to the mainland.

About a mile and a half south of the fort, a double row of lines extended across the neck from Harlem River to the Hudson. They faced south toward New York, were about a quarter of a mile apart, and were defended by batteries.

There were strong advanced posts about two miles south of the outer line; one on the left of Harlem, commanded by General Spencer, the other on the right, at what was called McGowan's Pass, commanded by General Putnam. About a mile and a half beyond these posts the British lines extended across the island from Horen's Hook to the Hudson, being a continuous encampment, two miles in length, with both flanks covered by shipping. An open plain intervened between the hostile camps.

Washington had established his headquarters about a quarter of a mile within the inner line; at a country-seat, the owners of which were absent. It belonged, in fact, to Colonel Roger Morris, his early companion in arms in Braddock's campaign, and his successful competitor for the hand of Miss Mary Philipse. Morris had remained in America, enjoying the wealth he had acquired by his marriage; but had adhered to the royal party, and was a member of the council of the colony. It is said that at this time he was re-

siding in the Highlands at Beverley, the seat of his brother-in-law, Washington's old friend, Beverley Robinson.*

While thus posted, Washington was incessantly occupied in fortifying the approaches to his camp by redoubts, *abatis*, and deep intrenchments. "Here," said he, "I should hope the enemy, in case of attack, would meet a defeat, if the generality of our troops would behave with tolerable bravery; but experience, to my extreme affliction, has convinced me that it is rather to be wished than expected. However, I trust there are many who will act like men worthy of the blessings of freedom." The late disgraceful scene at Kip's Bay was evidently rankling in his mind.

In the course of his rounds of inspection he was struck with the skill and science displayed in the construction of some of the works, which were thrown up under the direction of a youthful captain of artillery. It proved to be the same young officer, Alexander Hamilton, whom Greene had recommended to his notice. After some conversation with him, Washington invited him to his marquee, and thus commenced that intercourse which has indissolubly linked their memories together.

On the morning of the 16th, word was brought to headquarters that the enemy were advancing in three large columns. There had been so many false reports that Reed, the adjutant-general, obtained leave to sally out and ascertain the truth. Washington himself soon mounted his horse and rode toward the advanced posts. On arriving there he heard a brisk firing. It was kept up for a time with great spirit. There was evidently a sharp conflict. At length Reed came

* The portrait of Miss Mary Philipse is still to be seen in the possession of Frederick Phillips, Esquire, at the Grange, on the Highlands opposite West Point.

galloping back with information. A strong detachment of the enemy had attacked the most advanced post, which was situated on a hill skirted by a wood. It had been bravely defended by Lieutenant-colonel Knowlton, Putnam's favorite officer, who had distinguished himself at Bunker's Hill; he had under him a party of Connecticut rangers, volunteers from different regiments. After skirmishing for a time, the party had been overpowered by numbers and driven in, and the outpost was taken possession of by the enemy. Reed supposed the latter to be about three hundred strong, but they were much stronger, the main part having been concealed behind a rising ground in the wood. They were composed of a battalion of light infantry, another of Royal Highlanders, and three companies of Hessian riflemen; all under command of General Leslie.

Reed urged that troops should be sent to support the brave fellows who had behaved so well. While he was talking with Washington, "the enemy," he says, "appeared in open view, and sounded their bugles in the most insulting manner, as usual after a fox-chase. I never," adds he, "felt such a sensation before; it seemed to crown our disgrace."

Washington, too, was stung by the taunting note of derision; it recalled the easy triumph of the enemy at Kip's Bay. Resolved that something should be done to wipe out that disgrace, and rouse the spirits of the army, he ordered out three companies from Colonel Weedon's regiment, just arrived from Virginia, and sent them, under Major Leitch, to join Knowlton's rangers. The troops thus united were to get in the rear of the enemy, while a feigned attack was made upon them in front.

The plan was partially successful. As the force advanced to make the false attack, the enemy ran down the hill, and

took what they considered an advantageous position behind some fences and bushes which skirted it. A firing commenced between them and the advancing party, but at too great a distance to do much harm on either side. In the meantime, Knowlton and Leitch, ignorant of this change in the enemy's position, having made a circuit, came upon them in flank instead of in rear. They were sharply received. A vivid contest took place, in which Connecticut vied with Virginia in bravery. In a little while Major Leitch received three bullets in his side and was borne off the field. Shortly afterward, a wound in the head from a musket-ball brought Knowlton to the ground. Colonel Reed placed him on his horse and conveyed him to a distant redoubt. The men, undismayed by the fall of their leaders, fought with unflinching resolution under command of their captains. The enemy were re-enforced by a battalion of Hessians and a company of chasseurs. Washington, likewise, sent re-enforcements of New England and Maryland troops. The action waxed hotter and hotter; the enemy were driven from the wood into the plain, and pushed for some distance; the Americans were pursuing them with ardor, when Washington, having effected the object of this casual encounter, and being unwilling to risk a general action, ordered a retreat to be sounded.

It was with difficulty, however, his men could be called off, so excited were they by the novelty of pursuing an enemy. They retired in good order; and, as it subsequently appeared, in good season, for the main body of the enemy were advancing at a rapid rate, and might have effectually reversed the scene.

Colonel Knowlton did not long survive the action. "When gasping in the agonies of death," says Colonel Reed, "all his

inquiry was whether he had driven in the enemy." He was anxious for the tarnished honor of Connecticut. He had the dying satisfaction of knowing that his men had behaved bravely, and driven the enemy in an open field-fight. So closed his gallant career.

The encounter thus detailed was a small affair in itself, but important in its effects. It was the first gleam of success in the campaign, and revived the spirits of the army. Washington sought to turn it to the greatest advantage. In his general orders, he skillfully distributed praise and censure. The troops under Leitch were thanked for being the first to advance upon the enemy; and the New England troops for gallantly supporting them, and their conduct was honorably contrasted with that of the recreant troops at Kip's Bay. Of Knowlton, who had fallen while gloriously fighting, he spoke as "one who would have done honor to any country."

The name of Leitch was given by him for the next day's parole. That brave officer died of his wounds on the 1st of October, soothed in his last moments by that recompense so dear to a soldier's heart, the encomium of a beloved commander.

In the dead of the night, on the 20th of September, a great light was beheld by the picket guards, looming up from behind the hills in the direction of the city. It continued throughout the night, and was at times so strong that the heavens in that direction appeared to them, they said, as if in flames. At daybreak huge columns of smoke were still rising. It was evident there had been a great conflagration in New York.

In the course of the morning Captain Montresor, aid-de-camp to General Howe, came out with a flag, bearing a letter to Washington on the subject of an exchange of prison-

ers. According to Montresor's account a great part of the city had been burned down, and as the night was extremely windy, the whole might have been so but for the exertions of the officers and men of the British army. He implied it to be the act of American incendiaries, several of whom, he informed Colonel Reed, had been caught in the fact and instantly shot General Howe, in his private correspondence, makes the same assertion, and says they were detected and killed on the spot by the enraged troops in garrison.

Enraged troops, with weapons in their hands, were not apt, in a time of confusion and alarm, to be correct judges of fact or dispensers of justice. The act was always disclaimed by the Americans, and it is certain their commanders knew nothing about it. We have shown that the destruction of the city was at one time discussed in a council of war as a measure of policy, but never adopted, and was expressly forbidden by Congress.

The enemy were now bringing up their heavy cannon, preparatory to an attack upon the American camp by the troops and by the ships. What was the state of Washington's army? The terms of engagement of many of his men would soon be at an end; most of them would terminate with the year, nor did Congress hold out offers to encourage re-enlistments. "We are now, as it were, upon the eve of another dissolution of the army," writes he, "and unless some speedy and effectual measures are adopted by Congress, our cause will be lost." Under these gloomy apprehensions, he borrowed, as he said, "a few moments from the hours allotted to sleep," and on the night of the 24th of September penned an admirable letter to the President of Congress, setting forth the total inefficiency of the existing military system, the total insubordination, waste, confusion, and discontent

produced by it among the men, and the harassing cares and vexations to which it subjected the commanders. Nor did he content himself with complaining, but, in his full, clear, and sagacious manner, pointed out the remedies. To the achievements of his indefatigable pen we may trace the most fortunate turns in the current of our revolutionary affairs. In the present instance his representations, illustrated by sad experience, produced at length a reorganization of the army and the establishment of it on a more permanent footing. It was decreed that eighty-eight battallions should be furnished in quotas, by the different States, according to their abilities. The pay of the officers was raised. The troops which engaged to serve throughout the war were to receive a bounty of twenty dollars and one hundred acres of land, besides a yearly suit of clothes while in service. Those who enlisted for but three years received no bounty in land. The bounty to officers was on a higher ratio. The States were to send commissioners to the army to arrange with the commander-in-chief as to the appointment of officers in their quotas; but, as they might occasionally be slow in complying with this regulation, Washington was empowered to fill up all vacancies.

All this was a great relief to his mind. He was gratified also by effecting, after a long correspondence with the British commander, an exchange of prisoners, in which those captured in Canada were included. Among those restored to the service were Lord Stirling and Captain Daniel Morgan. The latter, in reward of his good conduct in the expedition with Arnold, and of "his intrepid behavior in the assault upon Quebec, where the brave Montgomery fell," was recommended to Congress by Washington for the command of a rifle regiment about to be raised. We shall see how

eminently he proved himself worthy of this recommendation.

About this time information was received that the enemy were enlisting great numbers of the loyalists of Long Island, and collecting large quantities of stock for their support. Oliver De Lancey, a leading loyalist of New York, member of a wealthy family of honorable Huguenot descent, was a prime agent in the matter. He had recently been appointed brigadier-general in the royal service, and authorized by General Howe to raise a brigade of Provincials; and was actually at Jamaica, on Long Island, offering commissions of captain, lieutenant, and ensign, to any respectable person who would raise a company of seventy men; the latter to receive British pay.

A descent upon Long Island, to counteract these projects, was concerted by General George Clinton of New York and General Lincoln of Massachusetts, but men and water craft were wanting to carry it into effect, and the "tory enlistments continued." They were not confined to Long Island, but prevailed more or less on Staten Island, in the Jerseys, up the Hudson as far as Dutchess County, and in Westchester County more especially. Many of the loyalists, it must be acknowledged, were honorable men, conscientiously engaged in the service of their sovereign, and anxious to put down what they sincerely regarded as an unjustifiable rebellion; and among these may be clearly classed the De Lanceys. There were others, however, of a different stamp, the most notorious of whom, at this juncture, was one Robert Rogers of New Hampshire. He had been a worthy comrade of Putnam and Stark in some of their early enterprises during the French war, and had made himself famous as major of a partisan corps called Rogers' Rangers. Governor

Trumbull described him as a "famous scouter and woodhunter, skilled in waylaying, ambuscade, and sudden attack." His feats of arms had evidently somewhat of the Indian character. He had since been Governor of Michilimackinac (1766), and accused of a plot to plunder his own fort and join the French. At the outbreak of the Revolution he played a skulking, equivocal part, and appeared ready to join either party. In 1775, Washington had received notice that he was in Canada, in the service of Carleton, and had been as a spy, disguised as an Indian, through the American camp at St. John's.

Recently, on learning that he was prowling about the country under suspicious circumstances, Washington had caused him to be arrested. On examination, he declared that he was on his way to offer his secret services to Congress. He was accordingly sent on to that body in custody of an officer. Congress liberated him on his pledging himself in writing, "on the honor of a gentleman," not to bear arms against the American United Colonies in any manner whatever during the contest with Great Britain.

Scarcely was he liberated when he forfeited his parole, offered his services to the enemy, received a colonel's commission, and was now actually raising a tory corps, to be called the Queen's Rangers. All such as should bring recruits to his standard were promised commissions, portions of rebel lands, and privileges equal to any of his majesty's troops.

Of all Americans of note enlisted under the royal standard, this man had rendered himself the most odious. He was stigmatized as an arrant renegade, a perfect Judas Iscariot; and his daring, adventurous spirit and habits of Indian warfare rendered him a formidable enemy.

Nothing perplexed Washington at this juncture more than the conduct of the enemy. He beheld before him a hostile army, armed and equipped at all points, superior in numbers, thoroughly disciplined, flushed with success, and abounding in the means of pushing a vigorous campaign, yet suffering day after day to elapse unimproved. What could be the reason of this supineness on the part of Sir William Howe? He must know the depressed and disorganized state of the American camp; the absolute chaos that reigned there. Did he meditate an irruption into the Jerseys? A movement toward Philadelphia? Did he intend to detach a part of his forces for a winter's campaign against the South?

In this uncertainty, Washington wrote to General Mercer, of the flying camp, to keep a vigilant watch from the Jersey shore on the movements of the enemy, by sea and land, and to station videttes on the Neversink Heights, to give immediate intelligence should any of the British fleet put to sea. At the same time he himself practiced unceasing vigilance, visiting the different parts of the camp on horseback. Occasionally he crossed over to Fort Constitution, on the Jersey shore, of which General Greene had charge, and, accompanied by him, extended his reconnoiterings down to Paulus Hook, to observe what was going on in the city, and among the enemy's ships. Greene had recently been promoted to the rank of major-general, and now had command of all the troops in the Jerseys. He had liberty to shift his quarters to Baskingridge or Bergen, as circumstances might require; but was enjoined to keep up a communication with the main army, east of the Hudson, so as to secure a retreat in case of necessity.

The security of the Hudson was at this time an object

of great solicitude with Congress, and much reliance was placed on Putnam's obstructions at Fort Washington. Four galleys, mounted with heavy guns and swivels, were stationed at the chevaux-de-frise, and two new ships were at hand, which, filled with stones, were to be sunk where they would block up the channel. A sloop was also at anchor, having on board a machine, invented by a Mr. Bushnell, for submarine explosion, with which to blow up the men-of-war; a favorite scheme with General Putnam. The obstructions were so commanded by batteries on each shore that it was thought no hostile ship would be able to pass.

On the 9th of October, however, the "Roebuck" and "Phœnix," each of forty-four guns, and the "Tartar," of twenty guns, which had been lying for some time opposite Bloomingdale, got under way with their three tenders, at eight o'clock in the morning, and came standing up the river with an easy southern breeze. At their approach, the galleys and the two ships intended to be sunk got under way with all haste, as did a schooner laden with rum, sugar, and other supplies for the American army, and the sloop with Bushnell's submarine machine.

The "Roebuck," "Phœnix" and "Tartar" broke through the vaunted barriers as through a cobweb. Seven batteries kept up a constant fire upon them, yet a gentleman was observed walking the deck of the second ship as coolly as if nothing were the matter.* Washington, indeed, in a letter to Schuyler, says, "They passed without any kind of damage or interruption"; but Lord Howe reports to the admiralty that they suffered much in their masts and rigging, and that a lieutenant, two midshipmen, and six men were killed, and eighteen wounded.

* Colonel Ewing to the Maryland Comm. of Safety.

The hostile ships kept on their course, the American vessels scudding before them. The schooner was overhauled and captured; a well-aimed shot sent the sloop and Bushnell's submarine engine to the bottom of the river. The two new ships would have taken refuge in Spyt den Duivel Creek, but fearing there might not be water enough, they kept on, and drove ashore at Philips' Mills at Yonkers. Two of the galleys got into a place of safety, where they were protected from the shore; the other two trusted to outsail their pursuers. The breeze freshened, and the frigates gained on them fast; at eleven o'clock began to fire on them with their bow-chasers, and at twelve o'clock overreached them, which caused them to bear in shore; at half-past one the galleys ran aground just above Dobbs' Ferry and lay exposed to a shower of grape-shot. The crews, without stopping to burn or bilge them, swam on shore, and the enemy took possession of the two galleys, which were likely to be formidable means of annoyance in their hands.

One express after another brought Washington word of these occurrences. First, he sent off a party of rifle and artillery men, with two twelve-pounders, to secure the new ships which had run aground at Yonkers. Next, he ordered Colonel Sargent to march up along the eastern shore with five hundred infantry, a troop of light-horse, and a detachment of artillery, to prevent the landing of the enemy. Before the troops arrived at Dobbs' Ferry, the ships' boats had plundered a store there, and set it on fire.

To prevent, if possible, the men-of-war already up the river from coming down, or others from below joining them, Washington gave orders to complete the obstructions. Two hulks which lay in Spyt den Duivel Creek were hastily ballasted by men from General Heath's division, and men

were sent up to get off the ships which had run aground at Philips' Mills, that they might be brought down and sunk immediately.

It is difficult to give an idea of the excitement caused by this new irruption of hostile ships into the waters of the Hudson, or of the various conjectures as to their object. They might intend merely to interrupt navigation, and prevent supplies from coming down to the American army. They might be carrying arms and ammunition for domestic enemies skulking about the river, and only waiting an opportunity to strike a blow. They might have troops concealed on board with intent to surprise the posts in the Highlands, and cut off the intercourse between the American armies. To such a degree had the spirit of disaffection been increased in the counties adjacent to the river, since the descent of the "Rose" and "Phœnix," by the retreats and evacuation which had taken place, and so great had been the drain on the militia of those counties for the army of Washington, that, in case of insurrection, those who remained at home, and were well affected, would be outnumbered, and might easily be overpowered, especially with the aid of troops landed from ships.

While this agitation prevailed below, fugitive river crafts carried the news up to the Highlands that the frigates were already before Tarrytown in the Tappan Sea. Word was instantly dispatched to Peter R. Livingston, president of the Provincial Congress, and startled that deliberative body, which was then seated at Fishkill, just above the Highlands. The committee of safety wrote, on the spur of the moment, to Washington. "Nothing," say they, "can be more alarming than the present situation of our State. We are daily getting the most authentic intelligence of bodies of men

enlisted and armed in order to assist the enemy. We much fear that they, co-operating with the enemy, may seize such passes as will cut off the communication between the army and us, and prevent your supplies. . . . We beg leave to suggest to your Excellency the propriety of sending a body of men to the Highlands or Peekskill, to secure the passes, prevent insurrection, and overawe the disaffected."

Washington transmitted the letter to the President of Congress on the 12th. "I have ordered up," writes he, "part of the militia from Massachusetts, under General Lincoln, to prevent, if possible, the consequences which they suggest may happen, and which there is reason to believe the conspirators have in contemplation. I am persuaded that they are on the eve of breaking out, and that they will leave nothing unessayed that will distress us, and favor the designs of the enemy, as soon as their schemes are ripe for it." In fact, it was said that the tories were arming and collecting in the Highlands, under the direction of disguised officers, to aid the conspiracies formed by Governor Tryon and his adherents.

As a further precaution, an express was sent off by Washington to Colonel Tash, who, with a regiment of New Hampshire militia, was on his way from Hartford to the camp, ordering him to repair with all possible dispatch to Fishkill, and there hold himself at the disposition of the committee of safety.

James Clinton, also, who had charge of the posts in the Highlands, was put on the alert. That trusty officer was now a brigadier-general, having been promoted by Congress on the 8th of August. He was charged to have all boats passing up and down the river rigidly searched, and the passengers examined. Besides the usual sentries, a barge

well-manned was to patrol the river opposite to each fort every night; all barges, rowboats, and other small craft, between the forts in the Highlands and the army were to be secured in a place of safety, to prevent their falling into the enemy's hands and giving intelligence. Moreover, a French engineer was sent up to aid in strengthening and securing the passes. The commanding officers of the counties of Litchfield and Fairfield, in Connecticut, had likewise orders to hold their militia in readiness, to render assistance in case of insurrections in the State of New York.

So perilous appeared the condition of affairs to residents up the river, that John Jay, a member of the New York Convention, and one of the secret committee for the defense of the Hudson, applied for leave of absence, that he might remove his aged parents to a place of safety. A letter from him to Edward Rutledge, of the Board of War, contains this remarkable sentence: "I wish our army well stationed in the Highlands, and all the lower country desolated; we might then bid defiance to all the further efforts of the enemy in that quarter."

Nor was this a random or despairing wish. It shows a brave spirit of a leading civilian of the day, and the sacrifices that true patriots were disposed to make in the cause of independence.

But a few days previously he had held the following language to Gouverneur Morris, chairman of a special committee: "Had I been vested with absolute power in this State, I have often said, and still think, that I would last spring have desolated all Long Island, Staten Island, the city and county of New York, and all that part of the county of Westchester which lies below the mountains. I would then have stationed the main body of the army in the moun-

tains on the east, and eight or ten thousand men in the Highlands on the west side of the river. I would have directed the river at Fort Montgomery, which is nearly at the southern extremity of the mountains, to be so shallowed as to afford only depth sufficient for an Albany sloop, and all the southern passes and defiles in the mountains to be strongly fortified. Nor do I think the shallowing of the river a romantic scheme. Rocky mountains rise immediately from the shores. The breadth is not very great, though the depth is. But what cannot eight or ten thousand men, well worked, effect? According to this plan of defense the State would be absolutely impregnable against all the world on the seaside, and would have nothing to fear except from the way of the lake. Should the enemy gain the river, even below the mountains, I think I foresee that a retreat would become necessary, and I can't forbear wishing that a desire of saving a few acres may not lead us into difficulties." *

Three days after this remarkable letter was written, the enemy's ships did gain the river; and two days afterward, October 11th, Reed, the adjutant-general, the confidant of Washington's councils, writes to his wife from Harlem Heights: "My most sanguine views do not extend further than keeping our ground here till this campaign closes. If the enemy incline to press us, it is resolved to risk an engagement, for, if we cannot fight them on this ground, we can on none in America. The ships are the only circumstances unfavorable to us here."

On the same day that this letter was written, a small vessel, sloop-rigged with a topsail, was descried from Mount Washington coming down the river with a fresh breeze. It

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 921.

was suspected by those on the lookout to be one of the British tenders, and they gave it a shot from a twelve-pounder. Their aim was unfortunately too true. Three of the crew were killed and the captain wounded. It proved to be Washington's yacht, which had run up the river previously to the enemy's ships, and was now on its return.*

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Lee expected in Camp—His Letter of Advice to the President of Congress—The Enemy at Throg's Neck—Washington's Arrangements—Rides to Throg's Neck—The Enemy brought to a Stand—Military Movements—Arrival of Lee—A Command assigned to him—Criticises the conduct of Congress and the Army—Council of War—The Army to move to the Mainland—Fort Washington to be kept up

"If General Lee should be in Philadelphia," writes John Jay to Rutledge, "pray hasten his departure—he is much wanted at New York."

The successes of Lee at the South were contrasted by many with the defeat on Long Island and evacuation of New York, and they began to consider him the main hope of the army. Hazard, the postmaster, writing from Harlem Heights to General Gates on the 11th, laments it as a misfortune that Lee should have been to the southward for several months past, but adds cheeringly, "he is expected here to-day."

Joseph Trumbull, the commissary-general, also writes to Gates under the same date: "General Lee is to be here this evening. He left Philadelphia on the 8th."

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* Heath's Memoirs.

Lee, the object of so many hopes, was actually in the Jerseys, on his way to the camp. He writes from Amboy on the 12th, to the President of Congress, informing him that the Hessians, encamped opposite on Staten Island, had disappeared on the preceding night, quitting the island entirely, and some great measure was believed to be in agitation. "I am confident," writes he, "they will not attack General Washington's lines; such a measure is too absurd for a man of Mr. Howe's genius; and unless they have received flattering accounts from Burgoyne, that he will be able to effectuate a junction (which I conceive they have not), they will no longer remain kicking their heels at New York. They will put the place in a respectable state of defense, which, with their command of the waters, may be easily done, leave four or five thousand men, and direct their operations to a more decisive object. They will infallibly proceed either immediately up the river Delaware with their whole troops, or, what is more probable, land somewhere about South Amboy or Shrewsbury, and march straight to Trenton or Burlington. On the supposition that this will be the case, what are we to do? What force have we? What means have we to prevent their possessing themselves of Philadelphia? General Washington's army cannot possibly keep pace with them. The length of his route is not only infinitely greater, but his obstructions almost insuperable. In short, before he could cross Hudson River they might be lodged and strongly fortified on both banks of the Delaware. . . . For Heaven's sake, arouse yourselves! For Heaven's sake, let ten thousand men be immediately assembled and stationed somewhere about Trenton. In my opinion, your whole depends upon it. I set out immediately for headquarters, where I shall communicate my apprehen-

sion that such will be the next operation of the enemy, and urge the expediency of sparing a part of his army (if he has any to spare) for this object." *

On the very morning that Lee was writing this letter at Amboy, Washington received intelligence by express from General Heath, stationed above King's Bridge, that the enemy were landing with artillery on Throg's Neck† in the Sound, about nine miles from the camp. Washington surmised that Howe was pursuing his original plan of getting to the rear of the American army, cutting off its supplies, which were chiefly derived from the east, and interrupting its communication with the main country. Officers were ordered to their alarm posts, and the troops to be ready, under arms, to act as occasion might require. Word, at the same time, was sent to General Heath to dispose of the troops on his side of King's Bridge, and of two militia regiments posted on the banks of Harlem River opposite the camp, in such manner as he should think necessary.

Having made all his arrangements as promptly as possible, Washington mounted his horse and rode over toward Throg's Neck to reconnoiter.

Throg's Neck is a peninsula in Westchester County, stretching upward of two miles into the Sound. It was separated from the mainland by a narrow creek and a marsh, and was surrounded by water every high tide. A bridge across a creek connecting with a ruined causeway across the marsh led to the mainland, and the upper end of the creek was fordable at low water. Early in the morning eighty or ninety boats full of men had stood up the Sound from Mon-

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 1008.

† Properly Throck's Neck, from Throckmorton, the name of the original proprietor.

tresor's Island and Long Island, and had landed troops to the number of four thousand on Throg's Point, the extremity of the neck. Thence their advance pushed forward toward the causeway and bridge to secure that pass to the mainland. General Heath had been too rapid for them. Colonel Hand and his Philadelphia riflemen, the same who had checked the British advance on Long Island, had taken up the planks of the bridge, and posted themselves opposite the end of the causeway, whence they commenced firing with their rifles. They were soon re-enforced by Colonel Prescott, of Bunker's Hill renown, with his regiment, and Lieutenant Bryant of the artillery, with a three-pounder. Checked at this pass, the British moved toward the head of the creek; here they found the Americans in possession of the ford, where they were re-enforced by Colonel Graham, of the New York line, with his regiment, and Lieutenant Jackson of the artillery, with a six-pounder. These skillful dispositions of his troops by General Heath had brought the enemy to a stand. By the time Washington arrived in the vicinity the British had encamped on the neck; the riflemen and yagers keeping up a scattering fire at each other across the marsh; and Captain Bryant now and then saluting the enemy with his field-piece.

Having surveyed the ground, Washington ordered works to be thrown up at the passes from the neck to the mainland. The British also threw up a work at the end of the causeway. In the afternoon nine ships, with a great number of schooners, sloops, and flat-bottomed boats full of men, passed through Hell Gate toward Throg's Point; and information received from two deserters gave Washington reason to believe that the greater part of the enemy's forces were gathering in that quarter. General McDougall's brigade, in which were Colonel Smallwood and the independent com-

panies, was sent in the evening to strengthen Heath's division at King's Bridge, and to throw up works opposite the ford of Harlem River.

Greene, who had heard of the landing of the enemy at Throg's Neck, wrote over to Washington, from Fort Constitution, informing him that he had three brigades ready to join him if required. "If the troops are wanted over your side," said he, "or likely to be so, they should be got over in the latter part of the night, as the shipping may move up from below, and impede, if not totally stop, the troops from passing. The tents upon Staten Island," he added, "had all been struck, as far as could be ascertained." It was plain the whole scene of action was changing.

On the 14th, General Lee arrived in camp, where he was welcomed as the harbinger of good luck. Washington was absent, visiting the posts beyond King's Bridge, and the passes leading from Throg's Neck; Lee immediately rode forth to join him. No one gave him a sincerer greeting than the commander-in-chief; who, diffident of his own military knowledge, had a high opinion of that of Lee. He immediately gave him command of the troops above King's Bridge, now the greatest part of the army, but desired that he would not exercise it for a day or two, until he had time to acquaint himself with the localities and arrangements of the posts; Heath, in the interim, held the command.

Lee was evidently elevated by his successes at the South, and disposed to criticise disparagingly the military operations of other commanders. In a letter, written on the day of his arrival to his old associate in arms, General Gates, he condemns the position of the army, and censures Washington for submitting to the dictation of Congress, whose meddlesome instructions had produced it. "*Inter nos*,"

writes he, "the Congress seem to stumble every step. I do not mean one or two of the cattle, but the whole stable. I have been very free in delivering my opinion to them. In my opinion, General Washington is much to blame in not menacing 'em with resignation unless they refrain from unhinging the army by their absurd interference.

"Keep us Ticonderoga; much depends upon it. We ought to have an army in the Delaware. I have roared it in the ears of Congress, but *carent auribus.* Adieu, my dear friend; if we do meet again—why, we shall smile." *

In the meantime, Congress, on the 11th of October, having heard of the ingress of the "Phœnix," "Roebuck," and "Tartar," passed a resolution that General Washington be desired, if it be practicable, by every art, and at whatever expense, to obstruct effectually the navigation of the North River between Fort Washington and Mount Constitution, as well to prevent the regress of the enemy's vessels lately gone up as to hinder them from receiving succors.

Under so many conflicting circumstances, Washington held a council of war on the 16th, at Lee's headquarters, at which all the major-generals were present excepting Greene, and all the brigadiers, as well as Colonel Knox, who commanded the artillery. Letters from the Convention and from individual members of it were read, concerning the turbulence of the disaffected in the upper parts of the State; intelligence gained from deserters was likewise stated, showing the intention of the enemy to surround the camp. The policy was then discussed of remaining in their present position on Manhattan Island, and awaiting there the menaced attack; the strength of the position was urged;

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 1038.

its being well fortified, and extremely difficult of access. Lee, in reply, scoffed at the idea of a position being good merely because its approaches were difficult. How could they think of holding a position where the enemy was so strong in front and rear; where ships had the command of the water on each side, and where King's Bridge was their only pass by which to escape from being wholly inclosed? Had not their recent experience on Long Island and at New York taught them the danger of such positions? "For my part," said he, "I would have nothing to do with the islands to which you have been clinging so pertinaciously —I would give Mr. Howe a fee-simple of them."

"After much consideration and debate," says the record of the council, "the following question was stated: Whether (it having appeared that the obstructions in the North River have proved insufficient, and that the enemy's whole force is now in our rear on Throg's Point) it is now deemed impossible, in our situation, to prevent the enemy from cutting off the communication with the country, and compelling us to fight them at all disadvantages, or surrender prisoners at discretion?"

All agreed, with but one dissenting voice, that it was not possible to prevent the communication from being cut off, and that one of the consequences mentioned in the question must follow.

The dissenting voice was that of General George Clinton, a brave, downright man, but little versed in the science of warfare. He could not comprehend the policy of abandoning so strong a position; they were equal in number to the enemy, and, as they must fight them somewhere, could do it to more advantage there than anywhere else. Clinton felt as a guardian of the Hudson and the upper country, and wished to meet the enemy, as it were, at the very threshold.

As the resolve of Congress seemed imperative with regard to Fort Washington, that post, it was agreed, should be "retained as long as possible."

A strong garrison was accordingly placed in it, composed chiefly of troops from Magaw's and Shee's Pennsylvania regiments, the latter under Lieutenant-colonel Lambert Cadwalader, of Philadelphia. Shee, having obtained leave of absence, Colonel Magaw was put in command of the post, and solemnly charged by Washington to defend it to the last extremity. The name of the opposite post on the Jersey shore, where Greene was stationed, was changed from Fort Constitution to Fort Lee, in honor of the general. Lee, in fact, was the military idol of the day. Even the family of the commander-in-chief joined in paying him homage. Colonel Tench Tilghman, Washington's aid-de-camp, in a letter to a friend, writes: "You ask if General Lee is in health, and our people bold. I answer both in the affirmative. His appearance among us has contributed not a little to the latter."

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Army Arrangements—Washington at White Plains—The Enemy at Throg's Point—Skirmish of Colonel Glover—Attempt to Surprise Rogers, the Renegade—Troopers in a rough Country—Alarms at White Plains—Cannonading of Ships at Fort Washington—March of Lee—Fortified Camp at White Plains—Reconnoitering—The Affair at Chatterton Hill—Relative Situation of the Armies—Change of Position—Contrast of the Appearance of the Troops—George Clinton's Idea of Strategy—Movement of the British Army—Incendiaries at White Plains

PREVIOUS to decamping from Manhattan Island, Washington formed four divisions of the army, which were respectively assigned to Generals Lee, Heath, Sullivan (recently

obtained in exchange for General Prescott), and Lincoln. Lee was stationed on Valentine's Hill, on the mainland, immediately opposite King's Bridge, to cover the transportation across it of the military stores and heavy baggage. The other divisions were to form a chain of fortified posts, extending about thirteen miles along a ridge of hills on the west side of the Bronx, from Lee's camp up to the village of White Plains.

Washington's headquarters continued to be on Harlem Heights for several days, during which time he was continually in the saddle, riding about a broken, woody, and half-wild country, forming posts and choosing sites for breastworks and redoubts. By his skillful disposition of the army it was protected in its whole length by the Bronx, a narrow but deep stream, fringed with trees, which ran along the foot of the ridge; at the same time his troops faced and outflanked the enemy, and covered the roads along which stores and baggage had to be transported. On the 21st he shifted his headquarters to Valentine's Hill, and on the 23d to White Plains, where he stationed himself in a fortified camp.

While he was thus incessantly in action, General, now Sir William Howe (having recently, in reward for his services, been made a Knight Companion of the Bath), remained for six days passive in his camp on Throg's Point, awaiting the arrival of supplies and re-enforcements, instead of pushing across to the Hudson and throwing himself between Washington's army and the upper country. His inaction lost him a golden opportunity. By the time his supplies arrived the Americans had broken up the causeway leading to the mainland, and taken positions too strong to be easily forced.

Finding himself headed in this direction, Sir William re-embarked part of his troops in flat-boats on the 18th, crossed Eastchester Bay, and landed on Pell's Point, at the mouth of Hutchinson's River. Here he was joined in a few hours by the main body, with the baggage and artillery, and proceeded through the manor of Pelham toward New Rochelle, still with a view to get above Washington's army.

In their march, the British were waylaid and harassed by Colonel Glover of Massachusetts, with his own, Reed's, and Shepard's regiments of infantry. Twice the British advance guards were thrown into confusion and driven back with severe loss, by a sharp fire from behind stone fences. A third time they advanced in solid columns. The Americans gave them repeated volleys, and then retreated with the loss of eight killed and thirteen wounded, among whom was Colonel Shepard. Colonel Glover, and the officers and soldiers who were with him in this skirmish, received the public thanks of Washington for their merit and good behavior.

On the 21st, General Howe was encamped about two miles north of New Rochelle, with his outposts extending to Mamaroneck on the Sound. At the latter place was posted Colonel Rogers, the renegade, as he was called, with the Queen's Rangers, his newly-raised corps of loyalists.

Hearing of this, Lord Stirling resolved, if possible, to cut off this outpost and entrap the old hunter. Colonel Haslet, of his brigade, always prompt on such occasions, undertook the exploit at the head of seven hundred and fifty Delaware troops, who had fought so bravely on Long Island. With these he crossed the line of the British march; came undiscovered upon the post; drove in the guard; killed a lieutenant and several men, and brought away thirty-six pris-

oners, with a pair of colors, sixty stands of arms, and other spoils. He missed the main prize, however: Rogers skulked off in the dark at the first fire. He was too old a partisan to be easily entrapped.

For this exploit Colonel Haslet and his men were publicly thanked by Lord Stirling, on parade.

These, and other spirited and successful skirmishes, while they retarded the advance of the enemy, had the far more important effect of exercising and animating the American troops, and accustoming them to danger.

While in this neighborhood, Howe was re-enforced by a second division of Hessians under General Knyphausen, and a regiment of Waldeckers, both of which had recently arrived in New York. He was joined, also, by the whole of the seventeenth light-dragoons, and a part of the sixteenth, which had arrived on the 3d instant from Ireland with Lieutenant-colonel (afterward Earl) Harcourt. Some of their horses had been brought with them across the sea, others had been procured since their arrival.

The Americans at first regarded these troopers with great dread. Washington, therefore, took pains to convince them that in a rough, broken country, like the present, full of stone fences, no troops were so inefficient as cavalry. They could be waylaid and picked off by sharpshooters from behind walls and thickets, while they could not leave the road to pursue their covert foe.

Further to inspirit them against this new enemy, he proclaimed, in general orders, a reward of one hundred dollars for every trooper brought in with his horse and accouterments, and so on, in proportion to the completeness of the capture.

On the 25th, about two o'clock in the afternoon, intelligence was brought to headquarters that three or four de-

tachments of the enemy were on the march, within four miles of the camp, and the main army following in columns. The drums beat to arms; the men were ordered to their posts; an attack was expected. The day passed away, however, without any demonstration of the enemy. Howe detached none of his force on lateral expeditions, evidently meditating a general engagement. To prepare for it, Washington drew all his troops from the posts along the Bronx into the fortified camp at White Plains. Here everything remained quiet but expectant throughout the 26th. In the morning of the 27th, which was Sunday, the heavy booming of cannon was heard from a distance, seemingly in the direction of Fort Washington. Scouts galloped off to gain intelligence. We will anticipate their report.

Two of the British frigates, at seven o'clock in the morning, had moved up the Hudson, and come to anchor near Burdett's Ferry, below the Morris House, Washington's old headquarters, apparently with the intention of stopping the ferry and cutting off the communication between Fort Lee and Fort Washington. At the same time, troops made their appearance on Harlem Plains, where Lord Percy held command. Colonel Morgan immediately manned the lines with troops from the garrison of Fort Washington. The ships opened a fire to enfilade and dislodge them. A barbette battery on the cliffs of the Jersey shore, to the left of the ferry, fired down upon the frigates, but with little effect. Colonel Magaw got down an eighteen-pounder to the lines near the Morris House, and fired fifty or sixty rounds, two balls at a time. Two eighteen-pounders were likewise brought down from Fort Lee and planted opposite the ships. By the fire from both shores they were hulled repeatedly.

It was the thundering of these cannonades which had reached Washington's camp at White Plains, and even startled the Highlands of the Hudson. The ships soon hoisted all sail. The foremost slipped her cable and appeared to be in the greatest confusion. She could make no way, though towed by two boats. The other ship, seeing her distress, sent two barges to her assistance, and by the four boats she was dragged out of reach of the American fire, her pumps going all the time. "Had the tide been flood one-half hour longer," writes General Greene, "we should have sunk her."

At the time that the fire from the ships began, Lord Percy brought up his field-pieces and mortars, and made an attack upon the lines. He was resolutely answered by the troops sent down from Fort Washington, and several Hessians were killed. An occasional firing was kept up until evening, when the ships fell down the river, and the troops which had advanced on Harlem Plains drew within their lines again.

"We take this day's movement to be only a feint," writes one of the garrison at Fort Lee; "at any rate it is little honorable to the red coats." Its chief effect was to startle the distant camp, and astound a quiet country with the thundering din of war.

The celebrated Thomas Paine, author of The Rights of Man, and other political works, was a spectator of the affair from the rocky summit of the Palisades, on the Jersey shore.

While these things were passing at Fort Washington, Lee had struck his tents, and with the rear division, eight thousand strong, the baggage and artillery, and a train of wagons four miles long, laden with stores and ammunition, was lumbering along the rough country roads to join the main army. It was not until Monday morning, after being on the road all night, that he arrived at White Plains.

Washington's camp was situated on high ground, facing the east. The right wing stretched toward the south along a rocky hill, at the foot of which the Bronx, making an elbow, protected it in flank and rear. The left wing rested on a small, deep lake among the hills. The camp was strongly intrenched in front.

About a quarter of a mile to the right of the camp, and separated from the height on which it stood by the Bronx and a marshy interval, was a corresponding height called Chatterton's Hill. As this partly commanded the right flank, and as the intervening bend of the Bronx was easily passable, Washington had stationed on its summit a militia regiment.

The whole encampment was a temporary one, to be changed as soon as the military stores collected there could be removed; and now that General Lee was arrived, Washington rode out with him and other general officers who were off duty to reconnoiter a height which appeared more eligible. When arrived at it, Lee pointed to another on the north, still more commanding. "Yonder," said he, "is the ground we ought to occupy." "Let us go, then, and view it," replied Washington. They were gently riding in that direction, when a trooper came spurring up his panting horse. "The British are in the camp, sir!" cried he. "Then, gentlemen," said Washington, "we have other business to attend to than reconnoitering." Putting spurs to his horse, he set off for the camp at full gallop, the others spurring after him.

Arrived at headquarters, he was informed by Adjutant-general Reed that the picket guards had all been driven in and the enemy were advancing; but that the whole American army was posted in order of battle. "Gentlemen," said

Washington, turning calmly to his companions, "you will return to your respective posts, and do the best you can."

Apprehensive that the enemy might attempt to get possession of Chatterton's Hill, he detached Colonel Haslet with his Delaware regiment to re-enforce the militia posted there. To these he soon added General McDougall's brigade, composed of Smallwood's Marylanders, Ritzema's New Yorkers, and two other regiments. These were much reduced by sickness and absence. General McDougall had command of the whole force upon the hill, which did not exceed sixteen hundred men.

These dispositions were scarcely made when the enemy appeared glistening on the high grounds beyond the village of White Plains. They advanced in two columns, the right commanded by Sir Henry Clinton, the left by the Hessian general, De Heister. There was also a troop of horse; so formidable in the inexperienced eyes of the Americans. "It was a brilliant but formidable sight," writes Heath in his Memoirs. "The sun shone bright, their arms glittered; and perhaps troops never were shown to more advantage."

For a time they halted in a wheat field, behind a rising ground, and the general officers rode up in the center to hold a consultation. Washington supposed they were preparing to attack him in front, and such indeed was their intention; but the commanding height of Chatterton's Hill had caught Sir William's eye, and he determined first to get possession of it.

Colonel Rahl was accordingly detached with a brigade of Hessians to make a circuit southwardly round a piece of wood, cross the Bronx about a quarter of a mile below, and ascend the south side of the hill; while General Leslie, with a large force, British and Hessian, should advance directly

in front, throw a bridge across the stream, and charge up the hill.

A furious cannonade was now opened by the British from fifteen or twenty pieces of artillery, placed on high ground opposite the hill; under cover of which the troops of General Leslie hastened to construct the bridge. In so doing they were severely galled by two field-pieces, planted on a ledge of rock on Chatterton's Hill, and in charge of Alexander Hamilton, the youthful captain of artillery. Smallwood's Maryland battalion, also, kept up a sharp fire of small arms.

As soon as the bridge was finished, the British and Hessians under Leslie rushed over it, formed, and charged up the hill to take Hamilton's two field-pieces. Three times the two field-pieces were discharged, plowing the ascending columns from hill-top to river; while Smallwood's "blue and buff" Marylanders kept up their volleys of musketry.

In the meantime, Rahl and his Hessian brigade forded the Bronx lower down, pushed up the south side of the hill, and endeavored to turn McDougall's right flank. The militia gave the general but little support. They had been dismayed at the opening of the engagement by a shot from a British cannon, which wounded one of them in the thigh, and nearly put the whole to flight. It was with the utmost difficulty McDougall had rallied them, and posted them behind a stone wall. Here they did some service, until a troop of British cavalry, having gained the crest of the hill, came on, brandishing their sabers. At their first charge, the militia gave a random, scattering fire, then broke and fled in complete confusion.

A brave stand was made on the summit of the hill by Haslet, Ritzema, and Smallwood, with their troops. Twice

they repulsed horse and foot, British and Hessians, until, cramped for room and greatly outnumbered, they slowly and sullenly retreated down the north side of the hill, where there was a bridge across the Bronx. Smallwood remained upon the ground for some time after the retreat had begun, and received two flesh wounds, one in the hip, the other through the arm. At the bridge over the Bronx, the retreating troops were met by General Putnam, who was coming to their assistance with Beall's brigade. In the rear of this they marched back into the camp.

The loss on both sides, in this short but severe action, was nearly equal. That of the Americans was between three and four hundred men, killed, wounded, and taken prisoners. At first it was thought to be much more, many of the militia and a few of the regulars being counted as lost, who had scattered themselves among the hills, but afterward returned to headquarters.

The British army now rested with their left wing on the hill they had just taken, and which they were busy intrenching. They were extending their right wing to the left of the American lines, so that their two wings and center formed nearly a semicircle. It was evidently their design to outflank the American camp, and get in the rear of it. The day, however, being far advanced, was suffered to pass without any further attack; but the morrow was looked forward to for a deadly conflict. Washington availed himself of this interval to have the sick and wounded, and as much of the stores as possible, removed from the camp. "The two armies," says General Heath in his Memoirs, "lay looking at each other, within long cannon-shot. In the night time the British lighted up a vast number of fires, the weather growing pretty cold. These fires, some on the level ground,

some at the foot of the hills, and at all distances to their brows, some of which were lofty, seemed to the eye to mix with the stars. The American side doubtless exhibited to them a similar appearance."

During this anxious night Washington was assiduously occupied throwing back his right wing to a stronger ground; doubling his intrenchments and constructing three redoubts, with a line in front, on the summit of his post. These works were principally intended for defense against small arms, and were thrown up with a rapidity that to the enemy must have savored of magic. They were, in fact, made of the stalks of Indian corn or maize, taken from a neighboring corn field, and pulled up with the earth clinging in masses to the large roots. "The roots of the stalks," says Heath, "and earth on them placed in the face of the works answered the purpose of sods and fascines. The tops being placed inward, as the loose earth was thrown upon them, became as so many trees to the work, which was carried up with a dispatch scarcely conceivable."

In the morning of the 29th, when Howe beheld how greatly Washington had improved his position and strengthened it, by what appeared to be solidly constructed works, he postponed his meditated assault, ordered up Lord Percy from Harlem with the fourth brigade and two battalions of the sixth, and proceeded to throw up lines and redoubts in front of the American camp, as if preparing to cannonade it. As the enemy was endeavoring to outflank him, especially on his right wing, Washington apprehended one of their objects might be to advance a part of their force and seize on Pine's Bridge over Croton River, which would cut off his communication with the upper country. General Beall, with three Maryland regiments, was sent off with all expedition to

secure that pass. It was Washington's idea that, having possession of Croton River and the passes in the Highlands, his army would be safe from further pursuit, and have time to repose after its late excessive fatigue, and would be fresh and ready to harass the enemy should they think fit to winter up the country.

At present nothing could exceed the warworn condition of the troops, unseasoned as they were to this kind of service. A scornful letter, written at this time by a British officer to his friend in London, gives a picture of the ragged plight to which they were reduced, in this rainy and inclement season. "The rebel army are in so wretched a condition, as to clothing and accouterments, that I believe no nation ever saw such a set of tatterdemalions. There are few coats among them but what are out at elbows, and in a whole regiment there is scarce a pair of breeches. Judge, then, how they must be pinched by a winter's campaign. We, who are warmly clothed and well equipped, already feel it severely; for it is even now much colder than I ever felt it in England."

Alas for the poor half-naked, weather-beaten patriots, who had to cope with these well-fed, well-clad, well-appointed mercenaries! A letter written at the very same date (October 31), by General George Clinton, shows what, in their forlorn plight, they had to grapple with.

"We had reason," writes he, "to apprehend an attack last night, or by daylight this morning. Our lines were manned all night in consequence; and a most horrid night it was to lay in cold trenches. Uncovered as we are, daily on fatigue, making redoubts, fleches, abatis, and retreating from them and the little temporary huts made for our comfort before they are well finished, I fear will ultimately

destroy our army without fighting.* However," adds he, honestly, "I would not be understood to condemn measures. They may be right for aught I know. I do not understand much of the refined art of war; it is said to consist in stratagem and deception." In a previous letter to the same friend, in a moment of hurry and alarm, he writes, "Pray let Mrs. Clinton know that I am well, and that she need not be uneasy about me. It would be too much honor to die in so good a cause."

Clinton, as we have before intimated, was an honest and ardent patriot, of resolute spirit and plain, direct good sense; but an inexperienced soldier. His main idea of warfare was straightforward fighting; and he was greatly perplexed by the continual strategy which Washington's situation required. One of the aides-de-camp of the latter had a truer notion on the subject. "The campaign hitherto," said he, "has been a fair trial of generalship, in which I flatter myself we have had the advantage. If we, with our motley army, can keep Mr. Howe and his grand appointment at bay, I think we shall make no contemptible military figure." †

On the night of the 31st, Washington made another of those moves which perplexed the worthy Clinton. In the course of the night he shifted his whole position, set fire to the barns and outhouses containing forage and stores which there was no time to remove, and, leaving a strong rear guard on the heights and in the neighboring woods, retired with his main army a distance of five miles, among the high, rocky hills about Northcastle. Here he immediately set to work to intrench and fortify himself; his policy at this time

* George Clinton to John McKesson, Oct. 31. Am. Archives, 5th Series, ii. 1312.

† Tench Tilghman to William Duer, Oct. 31.

being, as he used to say, "to fight with the spade and mattock."

General Howe did not attempt to dislodge him from this fastness. He at one time ordered an attack on the rear guard, but a violent rain prevented it, and for two or three days he remained seemingly inactive. "All matters are as quiet as if the enemy were one hundred miles distant from us," writes one of Washington's aides on the 2d of November. During the night of the 4th this quiet was interrupted. A mysterious sound was heard in the direction of the British camp; like the rumbling of wagons and artillery. At daybreak the meaning of it was discovered. The enemy were decamping. Long trains were observed defiling across the hilly country, along the roads leading to Dobbs' Ferry on the Hudson. The movement continued for three successive days, until their whole force, British and Hessians, disappeared from White Plains.

The night after their departure a party of Americans, heated with liquor, set fire to the court house and other edifices in the village, as if they had belonged to the enemy; an outrage which called forth a general order from Washington, expressive of his indignation, and threatening the perpetrators with signal punishment when detected. We notice this matter because, in British accounts, the burning of those buildings had been charged upon Washington himself; being, no doubt, confounded with the burning of the barns and outhouses ordered by him on shifting his encampment.

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

Conjectures as to the Intentions of the Enemy—Consequent Precautions—Correspondence with Greene respecting Fort Washington—Distribution of the Army—Lee left in Command at Northcastle—Instructions to him—Washington at Peekskill—Visits to the Posts in the Highlands

VARIOUS were the speculations at headquarters on the sudden movement of the enemy. Washington writes to General William Livingston (now governor of the Jerseys): "They have gone toward the North River and King's Bridge. Some suppose they are going into winter quarters, and will sit down in New York without doing more than investing Fort Washington. I cannot subscribe wholly to this opinion myself. That they will invest Fort Washington is a matter of which there can be no doubt; and I think there is a strong probability that General Howe will detach a part of his force to make an incursion into the Jerseys, provided he is going to New York. He must attempt something on account of his reputation, for what has he done as yet, with his great army?"

In the same letter he expressed his determination, as soon as it should appear that the present maneuver was a real retreat, and not a feint, to throw over a body of troops into the Jerseys to assist in checking Howe's progress. He, moreover, recommended to the governor to have the militia of that State put on the best possible footing, and a part of them held in readiness to take the place of the State levies, whose term of service would soon expire. He advised, also,

that the inhabitants contiguous to the water should be prepared to remove their stock, grain, effects, and carriages, on the earliest notice.

In a letter of the same date he charged General Greene, should Howe invest Fort Washington with part of his force, to give the garrison all possible assistance.

On the following day (Nov. 8), his aid-de-camp, Colonel Tilghman, writes to General Greene from headquarters: "The enemy are at Dobbs' Ferry with a great number of boats ready to go into Jersey, *or proceed up the river.*"

Greene doubted any intention of the enemy to cross the river; it might only be a feint to mislead; still, as a precaution, he had ordered troops up from the flying camp and was posting them opposite Dobbs' Ferry, and at other passes where a landing might be attempted; the whole being under the command of General Mercer.

Affairs at Fort Washington soon settled the question of the enemy's intentions with regard to it. Lord Percy took his station with a body of troops before the lines to the south. Knyphausen advanced on the north. The Americans had previously abandoned Fort Independence, burned its barracks, and removed the stores and cannon. Crossing King's Bridge, Knyphausen took a position between it and Fort Washington. The approach to the fort, on this side, was exceedingly steep and rocky; as, indeed, were all its approaches, excepting that on the south, where the country was more open and the ascent gradual. The fort could not hold within its walls above one thousand men; the rest of the troops were distributed about the lines and outworks. While the fort was thus menaced, the chevaux de-frise had again proved inefficient. On the night of the 5th, a frigate and two transports, bound up to Dobbs' Ferry, with supplies

for Howe's army, had broken through; though, according to Greene's account, not without being considerably shattered by the batteries.

Informed of these facts, Washington wrote to Greene on the 8th: "If we cannot prevent vessels from passing up the river, and the enemy are possessed of all the surrounding country, what valuable purpose can it answer to hold a post from which the expected benefit cannot be had? I am, therefore, inclined to think that it will not be prudent to hazard the men and stores at Mount Washington; but as you are on the spot, I leave it to you to give such orders as to evacuating Mount Washington as you may judge best, and so far revoking the orders given to Colonel Magaw, to defend it to the last."

Accounts had been received at headquarters of a considerable movement on the preceding evening (Nov. 7th), among the enemy's boats at Dobbs' Ferry, with the intention, it was said, of penetrating the Jerseys, and falling down upon Fort Lee. Washington, therefore, in the same letter, directed Greene to have all the stores not necessary to the defense removed immediately, and to destroy all the stock, the hay and grain, in the neighborhood, which the owners refused to move. "Experience has shown," adds he, "that a contrary conduct is not of the least advantage to the poor inhabitants, from whom all their effects of every kind are taken without distinction, and without the least satisfaction."

Greene, in reply (Nov. 9th), adhered with tenacity to the policy of maintaining Fort Washington. "The enemy," said he, "must invest it with double the number of men required for its defense. They must keep troops at King's Bridge, to cut off all communication with the country, and

in considerable force, for fear of an attack." He did not consider the fort in immediate danger. Colonel Magaw thought it would take the enemy until the end of December to carry it. In the meantime, the garrison could at any time be brought off, and even the stores removed, should matters grow desperate. If the enemy should not find it an object of importance, they would not trouble themselves about it; if they should, it would be a proof that they felt an injury from its being maintained. The giving it up would open for them a free communication with the country by the way of King's Bridge.*

It is doubtful when or where Washington received this letter, as he left the camp at Northcastle at eleven o'clock of the following morning. There being still considerable uncertainty as to the intentions of the enemy, all his arrangements were made accordingly. All the troops belonging to the States west of the Hudson were to be stationed in the Jerseys, under command of General Putnam. Lord Stirling had already been sent forward with the Maryland and Virginia troops to Peekskill to cross the river at King's Ferry. Another division, composed of Connecticut and Massachusetts troops, under General Heath, was to co-operate with the brigade of New York militia under General George Clinton, in securing the Highland posts on both sides of the river.

The troops which would remain at Northcastle after the departure of Heath and his division were to be commanded by Lee. Washington's letter of instructions to that general is characterized by his own modesty, and his deference for Lee's superior military experience. He suggests, rather than orders, yet his letter is sufficiently explicit. "A little

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 618.

time now," writes he, "must manifest the enemy's designs, and point out to you the measures proper to be pursued by that part of the army under your command. I shall give no directions, therefore, on this head, having the most entire confidence in your judgment and military exertions. One thing, however, I will suggest, namely, that the appearance of embarking troops for the Jerseys may be intended as a feint to weaken us, and render the post we now hold more vulnerable, or the enemy may find that troops are assembled with more expedition, and in greater numbers, than they expected, on the Jersey shore to oppose them; and, as it is possible, from one or other of these motives, that they may yet pay the party under your command a visit, it will be unnecessary, I am persuaded, to recommend to you the propriety of putting this post, if you stay at it, into a proper posture of defense, and guarding against surprises. But I would recommend it to your consideration whether, under the suggestion above, your retiring to Croton Bridge, and some strong post still more easterly (covering the passes through the Highlands), may not be more advisable than to run the hazard of an attack with unequal numbers. At any rate, I think all your baggage and stores, except such as are necessary for immediate use, ought to be to the northward of Croton River. . . . You will consider the post at Croton's (or Pine's) Bridge as under your immediate care. . . . If the enemy should remove the whole, or the greater part of their force to the west side of Hudson's River, I have no doubt of your following with all possible dispatch, leaving the militia and invalids to cover the frontiers of Connecticut in case of need."

We have been minute in stating these matters, from their bearing on subsequent operations.

On the 10th of November, Washington left the camp at Northcastle at eleven o'clock, and arrived at Peekskill at sunset; whither General Heath, with his division, had preceded him by a few hours. Lord Stirling was there, likewise, having effected the transportation of the Maryland and Virginia troops across the river, and landed them at the ferry south of Stony Point; though a better landing was subsequently found north of the point. His lordship had thrown out a scouting party in the advance, and a hundred men to take possession of a gap in the mountain, through which a road passed toward the Jerseys.

Washington was now at the entrance of the Highlands, that grand defile of the Hudson, the object of so much precaution and solicitude. On the following morning, accompanied by Generals Heath, Stirling, James and George Clinton, Mifflin, and others, he made a military visit in boats to the Highland posts. Fort Montgomery was in a considerable state of forwardness, and a work in the vicinity was projected to co-operate with it. Fort Constitution commanded a sudden bend of the river, but Lord Stirling, in his report of inspection, had intimated that the fort itself was commanded by West Point opposite. A glance of the eye, without going on shore, was sufficient to convince Washington of the fact. A fortress subsequently erected on that point has been considered the Key of the Highlands.

On the morning of the 12th, at an early hour, Washington rode out with General Heath to reconnoiter the east side of the Hudson, at the gorge of the Highlands. Henry Wisner, in a report to the New York Convention, had mentioned a hill to the north of Peekskill, so situated, with the road winding along the side of it, that ten men on the top, by rolling down stones, might prevent ten thousand from

passing. "I believe," said he, "nothing more need be done than to keep great quantities of stones at the different places where the troops must pass, if they attempt penetrating the mountains."

Near Robinson's Bridge, in this vicinity, about two miles from Peekskill, Washington chose a place where troops should be stationed, to cover the south entrance into the mountains; and here, afterward, was established an important military depot called Continental Village.

On the same day (12th) he wrote to General Lee, inclosing a copy of resolutions just received from Congress, respecting levies for the new army, showing the importance of immediately beginning the recruiting service. If no commissioners arrived from Rhode Island, he was to appoint the officers recommended to that State by General Greene. "I cannot conclude," adds he, "without reminding you of the military and other stores about your encampment, and at Northcastle, and to press the removal of them above Croton Bridge, or such other places of security as you may think proper. General Howe, having sent no part of his force to Jersey yet, makes the measure more necessary, as he may turn his views another way, and attempt their destruction."

It was evidently Washington's desire that Lee should post himself, as soon as possible, beyond the Croton, where he would be safe from surprise, and at hand to throw his troops promptly across the Hudson, should the Jerseys be invaded.

Having made all these surveys and arrangements, Washington placed Heath in the general command of the Highlands, with written instructions to fortify the passes with all possible dispatch, and directions how the troops were to be distributed on both sides of the river; and here we take occasion to give some personal notice of this trusty officer.

Heath was now in the fortieth year of his age. Like many of the noted officers of the Revolution, he had been brought up in rural life, on a hereditary farm near Boston; yet, according to his own account, though passionately fond of agricultural pursuits, he had, also, almost from childhood, a great relish for military affairs, and had studied every treatise on the subject in the English language, so that he considered himself "fully acquainted with the *theory* of war in all its branches and duties, from the private soldier to the commander-in-chief."

He describes himself to be of middling stature, light complexion, very corpulent, and bald-headed, so that the French officers who served in America compared him, in person, to the Marquis of Granby.*

Such was the officer intrusted with the command of the Highland passes, and encamped at Peekskill, their portal. We shall find him faithful to his trust; scrupulous in obeying the letter of his instructions; but sturdy and punctilious in resisting any undue assumption of authority.

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINE

Affairs on Lake Champlain—Gates at Ticonderoga—Arnold's Flotilla—Military Preparations of Sir Guy Carleton at St. John's—Nautical Encounters—Gallant Conduct of Arnold and Waterbury—Carleton in Possession of Crown Point—His Return to Canada and Winter Quarters

DURING his brief and busy sojourn at Peekskill, Washington received important intelligence from the Northern

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* Heath's Memoirs.

army; especially that part of it on Lake Champlain, under the command of General Gates. A slight retrospect of affairs in that quarter is proper before we proceed to narrate the eventful campaign in the Jerseys.

The preparations for the defense of Ticonderoga and the nautical service on the lake had met with difficulties at every step. At length, by the middle of August, a small flotilla was completed, composed of a sloop and schooner, each of twelve guns (six- and four-pounders), two schooners mounting eight guns each, and five gondolas, each of three guns. The flotilla was subsequently augmented, and the command given by Gates to Arnold, in compliance with the advice of Washington, who had a high opinion of that officer's energy, intrepidity, and fertility in expedients.

Sir Guy Carleton, in the meantime, was straining every nerve for the approaching conflict. The successes of the British forces on the seaboard had excited the zealous rivalry of the forces in Canada. The commanders, newly arrived, were fearful the war might be brought to a close before they could have an opportunity to share in the glory. Hence the ardor with which they encountered and vanquished obstacles which might otherwise have appeared insuperable. Vessels were brought from England in pieces, and put together at St. John's; boats of various kinds and sizes were transported overland, or dragged up the rapids of the Sorel. The soldiers shared with the seamen in the toil. The Canadian farmers, also, were taken from their agricultural pursuits, and compelled to aid in these, to them, unprofitable labors. Sir Guy was full of hope and ardor. Should he get the command of Lakes Champlain and George, the northern part of New York would be at his mercy; before winter set in he might gain possession of Albany. He would then be

able to co-operate with General Howe in severing and subduing the northern and southern provinces, and bringing the war to a speedy and triumphant close.

In despite of every exertion, three months elapsed before his armament was completed. Winter was fast approaching. Before it arrived, the success of his brilliant plan required that he should fight his way across Lake Champlain; carry the strong posts of Crown Point and Ticonderoga; traverse Lake George, and pursue a long and dangerous march through a wild and rugged country, beset with forests and morasses, to Albany. That was the first post to the southward where he expected to find rest and winter quarters for his troops.*

By the month of October, between twenty and thirty sail were afloat and ready for action. The flagship (the "Inflexible") mounted eighteen twelve-pounders; the rest were gunboats, a gondola, and a flat-bottomed vessel called a radeau, and named the "Thunderer"; carrying a battery of six twenty-four and twelve six-pounders, besides howitzers. The gunboats mounted brass field-pieces and howitzers. Seven hundred seamen navigated the fleet; two hundred of them were volunteers from the transports. The guns were worked by detachments from the corps of artillery. In a word, according to British accounts, "no equipment of the kind was ever better appointed, or more amply furnished with every kind of provision necessary for the intended service." †

Captain Pringle conducted the armament, but Sir Guy Carleton was too full of zeal and too anxious for the event not to head the enterprise; he accordingly took his station

* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 212. † Idem., p. 211.

on the deck of the flagship. They made sail early in October, in quest of the American squadron, which was said to be abroad upon the lake. Arnold, however, being ignorant of the strength of the enemy, and unwilling to encounter a superior force in the open lake, had taken his post under cover of Valcour Island, in the upper part of a deep channel, or strait, between that island and the mainland. His force consisted of three schooners, two sloops, three galleys, and eight gondolas; carrying in all seventy guns, many of them eighteen-pounders.

The British ships, sweeping past Cumberland Head with a fair wind and flowing sail on the morning of the 11th, had left the southern end of Valcour Island astern, when they discovered Arnold's flotilla anchored behind it, in a line extending across the strait, so as not to be outflanked. They immediately hauled close to the wind, and tried to beat up into the channel. The wind, however, did not permit the largest of them to enter. Arnold took advantage of the circumstance. He was on board of the galley "Congress," and leaving the line, advanced with two other galleys and the schooner "Royal Savage," to attack the smaller vessels as they entered, before the large ones could come up. About twelve o'clock the enemy's schooner "Carleton" opened a brisk fire upon the "Royal Savage" and the galleys. It was as briskly returned. Seeing the enemy's gunboats approaching, the Americans endeavored to return to the line. In so doing, the "Royal Savage" ran aground. Her crew set her on fire and abandoned her. In about an hour the British brought all their gunboats in a range across the lower channel, within musket-shot of the Americans, the schooner "Carleton" in the advance. They landed, also, a large number of Indians on the island, to keep up a galling fire

from the shore upon the Americans with their rifles. The action now became general, and was severe and sanguinary. The Americans, finding themselves thus hemmed in by a superior force, fought with desperation. Arnold pressed with his galley into the hottest of the fight. The "Congress" was hulled several times, received seven shots between wind and water, was shattered in mast and rigging, and many of the crew were killed and wounded. The ardor of Arnold increased with his danger. He cheered on his men by voice and example, often pointing the guns with his own hands. He was ably seconded by Brigadier-general Waterbury, in the "Washington" galley, which, like his own vessel, was terribly cut up. The contest lasted throughout the day. Carried on as it was within a narrow compass, and on a tranquil lake, almost every shot took effect. The fire of the Indians from the shore was less deadly than had been expected; but their whoops and yells, mingling with the rattling of the musketry and the thundering of the cannon, increased the horrors of the scene. Volumes of smoke rose above the woody shores, which echoed with the unusual din of war, and for a time this lovely recess of a beautiful and peaceful lake was rendered a perfect pandemonium.

The evening drew nigh, yet the contest was undecided. Captain Pringle, after a consultation with Sir Guy Carleton, called off the smaller vessels which had been engaged, and anchored his whole squadron in a line as near as possible to the Americans, so as to prevent their escape; trusting to capture the whole of them when the wind should prove favorable, so that he could bring his large vessels into action.

Arnold, however, sensible that with his inferior and crippled force all resistance would be unavailing, took ad-

vantage of a dark, cloudy night and a strong north wind; his vessels slipped silently through the enemy's line without being discovered, one following a light on the stern of the other; and by daylight they were out of sight. They had to anchor, however, at Schuyler's Island, about ten miles up the lake, to stop leaks and make repairs. Two of the gondolas were here sunk, being past remedy. About noon the retreat was resumed, but the wind had become adverse; and they made little progress. Arnold's galley, the "Congress," the "Washington" galley, and four gondolas, all which had suffered severely in the late fight, fell astern of the rest of the squadron in the course of the night. In the morning, when the sun lifted a fog which had covered the lake, they beheld the enemy within a few miles of them in full chase, while their own comrades were nearly out of sight, making the best of their way for Crown Point.

It was now an anxious trial of speed and seamanship. Arnold, with the crippled relics of his squadron, managed by noon to get within a few leagues of Crown Point, where they were overtaken by the "Inflexible," the "Carleton," and the schooner "Maria," of fourteen guns. As soon as they came up they poured in a tremendous fire. The "Washington" galley, already shattered, and having lost most of her officers, was compelled to strike, and General Waterbury and the crew were taken prisoners. Arnold had now to bear the brunt of the action. For a long time he was engaged within musket-shot with the "Inflexible" and the two schooners, until his galley was reduced to a wreck, and one-third of the crew were killed. The gondolas were nearly in the same desperate condition; yet the men stood stoutly to their guns. Seeing resistance vain, Arnold determined that neither vessels nor crew should fall into the hands of the enemy.

He ordered the gondolas to run on shore, in a small creek in the neighborhood, the men to set fire to them as soon as they grounded, to wade on shore with their muskets, and keep off the enemy until they were consumed. He did the same with his own galley; remaining on board of her until she was in flames, lest the enemy should get possession and strike his flag, which was kept flying to the last.

He now set off with his gallant crew, many of whom were wounded, by a road through the woods to Crown Point, where he arrived at night, narrowly escaping an Indian ambush. Two schooners, two galleys, one sloop and one gondola, the remnant which had escaped of this squadron, were at anchor at the Point, and General Waterbury and most of his men arrived there the next day on parole. Seeing that the place must soon fall into the hands of the enemy, they set fire to the houses, destroyed everything they could not carry away, and embarking in the vessels, made sail for Ticonderoga.

The loss of the Americans in these two actions is said to have been between eighty and ninety men; that of the British about forty. It is worthy of mention that among the young officers in Sir Guy Carleton's squadron was Edward Pellew, who afterward rose to renown as Admiral Viscount Exmouth; celebrated, among other things, for his victory at Algiers.

The conduct of Arnold in these naval affairs gained him new laurels. He was extolled for the judgment with which he chose his position and brought his vessels into action; for his masterly retreat, and for the self-sacrificing devotion with which he exposed himself to the overwhelming force of the enemy in covering the retreat of part of his flotilla.

Sir Guy Carleton took possession of the ruined works at

Crown Point, where he was soon joined by the army. He made several movements by land and water, as if meditating an attack upon Ticonderoga; pushing strong detachments on both sides of the lake, which approached within a small distance of the fort, while one vessel appeared within cannon shot of a lower battery, sounding the depth of the channel, until a few shot obliged her to retire. General Gates, in the meantime, strengthened his works with incessant assiduity, and made every preparation for an obstinate defense. A strong easterly wind prevented the enemy's ships from advancing to attack the lines, and gave time for the arrival of re-enforcements of militia to the garrison. It also afforded time for Sir Guy Carleton to cool in ardor, and calculate the chances and the value of success. The post, from its strength and the apparent number and resolution of the garrison, could not be taken without great loss of life. If taken, the season was now too far advanced to think of passing Lake George and exposing the army to the perils of a winter campaign in the inhospitable and impracticable wilds to the southward. Ticonderoga, too, could not be kept during the winter, so that the only result of the capture would be the reduction of the works and the taking of some cannon; all which damage the Americans could remedy before the opening of the summer campaign. If, however, the defense should be obstinate, the British army, even if successful, might sustain a loss sufficient to cripple its operations in the coming year.*

These, and other prudential reasons, induced Carleton to give up all attempt upon the fortress at present; wherefore, re-embarking his troops, he returned to St. John's, and can-

* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 214.

toned them in Canada for the winter. It was not until about the 1st of November that a reconnoitering party, sent out from Ticonderoga by General Gates, brought him back intelligence that Crown Point was abandoned by the enemy, and not a hostile sail in sight. All apprehensions of an attack upon Ticonderoga during the present year were at an end, and many of the troops stationed there were already on their march toward Albany.

Such was the purport of the news from the north, received by Washington at Peekskill. It relieved him for the present from all anxiety respecting affairs on Lake Champlain, and gave him the prospect of re-enforcements from that quarter.

CHAPTER FORTY

Washington crosses the Hudson—Arrives at Fort Lee—Affairs at Fort Washington—Question about its Abandonment—Movements of Howe—The Fort summoned to Surrender—Refusal of Colonel Magaw—The Fort attacked—Capture of the Fort and Garrison—Comments of Washington on the State of Affairs

On the morning of the 12th of November, Washington crossed the Hudson to the ferry below Stony Point, with the residue of the troops destined for the Jerseys. Far below were to be descried the "Phœnix," the "Roebuck," and the "Tartar" at anchor in the broad waters of Haverstraw Bay and the Tappan Sea, guarding the lower ferries. The army, thus shut out from the nearer passes, was slowly winding its way by a circuitous route through the gap in the mountains, which Lord Stirling had secured. Leaving the troops which had just landed to pursue the same route to the Hackensack, Washington, accompanied by Colonel Reed, struck a direct

course for Fort Lee, being anxious about affairs at Fort Washington. He arrived there on the following day, and found, to his disappointment, that General Greene had taken no measures for the evacuation of that fortress; but, on the contrary, had re-enforced it with a part of Colonel Durkee's regiment, and the regiment of Colonel Rawlings, so that its garrison now numbered upward of two thousand men; a great part, however, were militia. Washington's orders for its evacuation had, in fact, been discretionary, leaving the execution of them to Greene's judgment, "as being on the spot." The latter had differed in opinion as to the policy of such a measure; and Colonel Magaw, who had charge of the fortress, was likewise confident it might be maintained.

Colonel Reed was of opposite counsels; but then he was personally interested in the safety of the garrison. It was composed almost entirely of Pennsylvania troops, under Magaw and Lambert Cadwalader; excepting a small detachment of Maryland riflemen commanded by Otho H. Williams. They were his friends and neighbors, the remnant of the brave men who had suffered so severely under Atlee and Smallwood.* The fort was now invested on all sides but one; and the troops under Howe which had been encamped at Dobbs' Ferry were said to be moving down toward it. Reed's solicitude was not shared by the garrison itself. Colonel Magaw, its brave commander, still thought it was in no immediate danger.

Washington was much perplexed. The main object of Howe was still a matter of doubt with him. He could not think that Sir William was moving his whole force upon that fortress, to invest which a part would be sufficient. He ex-

* W. B. Reed's Life of Reed, i. 252.

pected an ulterior object, probably a Southern expedition, as he was told a large number of ships were taking in wood and water at New York. He resolved, therefore, to continue a few days in this neighborhood, during which he trusted the designs of the enemy would be more apparent; in the meantime he would distribute troops at Brunswick, Amboy, Elizabethtown, and Fort Lee, so as to be ready at these various points to check any incursions into the Jerseys.

In a letter to the President of Congress, he urged for an increase of ordnance and field-artillery. The rough, hilly country east of the Hudson, and the strongholds and fastnesses of which the Americans had possessed themselves, had prevented the enemy from profiting by the superiority of their artillery; but this would not be the case should the scene of action change to an open campaign country like the Jerseys.

Washington was mistaken in his conjecture as to Sir William Howe's design. The capture of Fort Washington was, at present, his main object; and he was encamped on Fordham Heights, not far from King's Bridge, until preliminary steps should be taken. In the night of the 14th, thirty flat-bottomed boats stole quietly up the Hudson, passed the American forts undiscovered, and made their way through Spyt den Duivel Creek into Harlem River. The means were thus provided for crossing that river and landing before unprotected parts of the American works.

On the 15th, General Howe sent in a summons to surrender with a threat of extremities should he have to carry the place by assault. Magaw, in his reply, intimated a doubt that General Howe would execute a threat "so unworthy of himself and the British nation; but give me leave," added

he, "to assure his Excellency that, actuated by the most glorious cause that mankind ever fought in, I am determined to defend this post to the very last extremity."

Apprised by the colonel of his peril, General Greene sent over re-enforcements, with an exhortation to him to persist in his defense; and dispatched an express to Washington, who was at Hackensack, where the troops which had crossed from Peekskill were encamped. It was nightfall when Washington arrived at Fort Lee. Greene and Putnam were over at the besieged fortress. He threw himself into a boat, and had partly crossed the river, when he met those generals returning. They informed him of the garrison's having been re-enforced, and assured him that it was in high spirits and capable of making a good defense. It was with difficulty, however, they could prevail on him to return with them to the Jersey shore, for he was excessively excited.

Early the next morning (16th), Magaw made his dispositions for the expected attack. His forces, with the recent additions, amounted to nearly three thousand men. As the fort could not contain above a third of that number, most of them were stationed about the outworks.

Colonel Lambert Cadwalader, with eight hundred Pennsylvanians, was posted in the outer lines, about two miles and a half south of the fort, the side menaced by Lord Percy with sixteen hundred men. Colonel Rawlings of Maryland, with a body of troops, many of them riflemen, was stationed by a three-gun battery on a rocky, precipitous hill north of the fort, and between it and Spyt den Duivel Creek. Colonel Baxter, of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, with his regiment of militia, was posted east of the fort, on rough, woody heights, bordering the Harlem River, to watch the motions of the enemy, who had thrown up redoubts on high and

commanding ground, on the opposite side of the river, apparently to cover the crossing and landing of troops.

Sir William Howe had planned four simultaneous attacks; one on the north by Knyphausen, who was encamped on the York side of King's Bridge, within cannon-shot of Fort Washington, but separated from it by high and rough hills, covered with almost impenetrable woods. He was to advance in two columns, formed by detachments made from the Hessians of his corps, the brigade of Rahl, and the regiment of Waldeckers. The second attack was to be by two battalions of light infantry and two battalions of guards, under Brigadier-general Mathew, who was to cross Harlem River in flat-boats, under cover of the redoubts above mentioned, and to land on the right of the fort. This attack was to be supported by the first and second grenadiers and a regiment of light infantry under command of Lord Cornwallis. The third attack, intended as a feint to distract the attention of the Americans, was to be by Colonel Sterling, with the forty-second regiment, who was to drop down the Harlem River in bateaux, to the left of the American lines, facing New York. The fourth attack was to be on the south, by Lord Percy, with the English and Hessian troops under his command, on the right flank of the American intrenchments.*

About noon, a heavy cannonade thundering along the rocky hills, and sharp volleys of musketry, proclaimed that the action was commenced. Knyphausen's division was pushing on from the north in two columns, as had been arranged. The right was led by Colonel Rahl, the left by himself. Rahl essayed to mount a steep, broken height,

* Sir William Howe to Lord George Germaine.

called Cock Hill, which rises from Spyt den Duivel Creek, and was covered with woods. Knyphausen undertook a hill rising from the King's Bridge road, but soon found himself entangled in a woody defile, difficult to penetrate, and where his Hessians were exposed to the fire of the three-gun battery and Rawlings' riflemen.

While this was going on at the north of the fort, General Mathew, with his light infantry and guards, crossed the Harlem River in the flat-boats, under cover of a heavy fire from the redoubts.

He made good his landing, after being severely handled by Baxter and his men, from behind rocks and trees, and the breastworks thrown up on the steep river bank. A short contest ensued. Baxter, while bravely encouraging his men, was killed by a British officer. His troops, overpowered by numbers, retreated to the fort. General Mathew now pushed on with his guards and light infantry to cut off Cadwalader. That officer had gallantly defended the lines against the attack of Lord Percy, until informed that Colonel Sterling was dropping down Harlem River in bateaux to flank the lines and take him in the rear. He sent off a detachment to oppose his landing. They did it manfully. About ninety of Sterling's men were killed or wounded in their boats, but he persevered, landed, and forced his way up a steep height, which was well defended, gained the summit, forced a redoubt, and took nearly two hundred prisoners. Thus doubly assailed, Cadwalader was obliged to retreat to the fort. He was closely pursued by Percy with his English troops and Hessians, but turned repeatedly on his pursuers. Thus he fought his way to the fort, with the loss of several killed and more taken prisoners; but marking his track by the number of Hessians slain.

The defense on the north side of the fort was equally obstinate and unsuccessful. Rawlings, with his Maryland riflemen and the aid of the three-gun battery, had for some time kept the left column of Hessians and Waldeckers under Knyphausen at bay. At length Colonel Rahl, with the right column of the division, having forced his way directly up the north side of the steep hill at Spyt den Duivel Creek, came upon Rawlings' men, whose rifles, from frequent discharges, had become foul and almost useless; drove them from their strong post, and followed them until within a hundred yards of the fort, where he was joined by Knyphausen, who had slowly made his way through dense forests and over felled trees. Here they took post behind a large stone house, and sent in a flag, with a second summons to surrender.

Washington, surrounded by several of his officers, had been an anxious spectator of the battle from the opposite side of the Hudson. Much of it was hidden from him by intervening hills and forest; but the roar of cannonry from the valley of Harlem River, the sharp and incessant reports of rifles, and the smoke rising above the tree-tops, told him of the spirit with which the assault was received at various points, and gave him for a time a hope that the defense might be successful. The action about the lines to the south lay open to him, and could be distinctly seen through a telescope; and nothing encouraged him more than the gallant style in which Cadwalader with an inferior force maintained his position. When he saw him, however, assailed in flank, the line broken, and his troops, overpowered by numbers, retreating to the fort, he gave up the game as lost. The worst sight of all was to behold his men cut down and bayoneted by the Hessians while begging quarter. It is said so com-

pletely to have overcome him that he wept "with the tenderness of a child."

Seeing the flag go into the fort from Knyphausen's division, and surmising it to be a summons to surrender, he wrote a note to Magaw, telling him that if he could hold out until evening, and the place could not be maintained, he would endeavor to bring off the garrison in the night. Captain Gooch, of Boston, a brave and daring man, offered to be the bearer of the note. "He ran down to the river, jumped into a boat, pushed over the river, landed under the bank, ran up to the fort, and delivered the message—came out, ran and jumped over the broken ground, dodging the Hessians, some of whom struck at him with their pieces, and others attempted to thrust him with their bayonets; escaping through them, he got to his boat, and returned to Fort Lee.*

Washington's message arrived too late. "The fort was so crowded by the garrison and the troops which had retreated into it that it was difficult to move about. The enemy, too, were in possession of the little redoubts around, and could have poured in showers of shells and ricochet balls that would have made dreadful slaughter." It was no longer possible for Magaw to get his troops to man the lines; he was compelled, therefore, to yield himself and his garrison prisoners of war. The only terms granted them were that the men should retain their baggage and the officers their swords.

The sight of the American flag hauled down and the British flag waving in its place told Washington of the surrender. His instant care was for the safety of the upper country, now that the lower defenses of the Hudson were

* Heath's Memoirs, p. 86.

at an end. Before he knew anything about the terms of capitulation, he wrote to General Lee, informing him of the surrender, and calling his attention to the passes of the Highlands and those which lay east of the river; begging him to have such measures adopted for their defense as his judgment should suggest to be necessary. "I do not mean," added he, "to advise abandoning your present post, contrary to your own opinion; but only to mention my own ideas of the importance of those passes, and that you cannot give too much attention to their security, by having works erected on the most advantageous places for that purpose."

Lee, in reply, objected to removing from his actual encampment at Northcastle. "It would give us," said he, "the air of being frightened; it would expose a fine, fertile country to their ravages; and I must add that we are as secure as we could be in any position whatever." After stating that he should deposit his stores, etc., in a place fully as safe, and more central than Peekskill, he adds: "As to ourselves, light as we are, several retreats present themselves. In short, if we keep a good lookout, we are in no danger; but I must entreat your Excellency to enjoin the officers posted at Fort Lee to give us the quickest intelligence if they observe any embarkation on the North River." As to the affair of Fort Washington, all that Lee observed on the subject was: "Oh, general, why would you be overpersuaded by men of inferior judgment to your own? It was a cursed affair."

Lee's allusion to men of inferior judgment was principally aimed at Greene, whose influence with the commander-in-chief seems to have excited the jealousy of other officers of rank. So Colonel Tilghman, Washington's aid-de-camp, writes on the 17th, to Robert R. Livingston of New York:

"We were in a fair way of finishing the campaign with credit to ourselves, and, I think, to the disgrace of Mr. Howe; and, had the general followed his own opinion, the garrison would have been withdrawn immediately upon the enemy's falling down from Dobbs' Ferry. But General Greene was positive that our forces might at any time be drawn off under the guns of Fort Lee. Fatal experience has evinced the contrary." *

Washington's own comments on the reduction of the fort, made in a letter to his brother Augustine, are worthy of special note. "This is a most unfortunate affair, and has given me great mortification; as we have lost not only two thousand men † that were there, but a good deal of artillery and some of the best arms we had. And what adds to my mortification is that this post, after the last ships went past it, was held contrary to my wishes and opinion, as I conceived it to be a hazardous one: but it having been determined on by a full council of general officers, and a resolution of Congress having been received, strongly expressive of their desire that the channel of the river, which we had been laboring to stop for a long time at that place, might be obstructed, if possible; and knowing that this could not be done unless there were batteries to protect the obstructions, I did not care to give an absolute order for withdrawing the garrison till I could get round and see the situation of things; and then it became too late, as the place was invested. Upon the passing of the last ships, I had given it as my opinion to General Greene, under whose care it was, that it would be

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 780.

† The number of prisoners, as returned by Sir William Howe, was 2,818, of whom 2,607 were privates. They were marched off to New York at midnight.

best to evacuate the place; but, as the order was discretionary, and his opinion different from mine, it was unhappily delayed too long; to my great grief."

The correspondence of Washington with his brother is full of gloomy anticipations. "In ten days from this date there will not be above two thousand men, if that number, of the fixed established regiments on this side of Hudson River to oppose Howe's whole army; and very little more on the other, to secure the eastern colonies and the important passes leading through the Highlands to Albany and the country about the lakes. In short, it is impossible for me, in the compass of a letter, to give you any idea of our situation, of my difficulties, and of the constant perplexities I meet with, derived from the unhappy policy of short enlistments, and delaying them too long. Last fall, or winter, before the army, which was then to be raised, was set about, I represented in clear and explicit terms the evils which would arise from short enlistments, the expense which must attend the raising an army every year, and the futility of such an army when raised; and if I had spoken with a prophetic spirit I could not have foretold the evils with more accuracy than I did. All the year since, I have been pressing Congress to delay no time in engaging men upon such terms as would insure success, telling them that the longer it was delayed the more difficult it would prove. But the measure was not commenced until it was too late to be effected. . . . I am wearied almost to death with the retrograde motion of things; and I solemnly protest that a pecuniary reward of twenty thousand pounds a year would not induce me to undergo what I do, and, after all, perhaps to lose my character; as it is impossible, under such a variety of distressing circumstances, to conduct matters agreeably to public expectation."

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

The Enemy cross the Hudson—Retreat of the Garrison from Fort Lee—The Crossing of the Hackensack—Lee ordered to move to the West Side of the River—Reed's Letter to him—Second move of the Army—Beyond the Passaic—Assistance sought from various Quarters—Correspondence and Schemes of Lee—Heath stanch to his Instructions—Anxiety of George Clinton for the Safety of the Hudson—Critical Situation of the Army—Disparaging Correspondence between Lee and Reed—Washington retreats across the Raritan—Arrives at Trenton—Removes his Baggage across the Delaware—Dismay and Despondency of the Country—Proclamation of Lord Howe—Exultation of the Enemy—Washington's Resolve in case of Extremity

With the capture of Fort Washington, the project of obstructing the navigation of the Hudson at that point was at an end. Fort Lee, consequently, became useless, and Washington ordered all the ammunition and stores to be removed, preparatory to its abandonment. This was effected with the whole of the ammunition and a part of the stores, and every exertion was making to hurry off the remainder, when, early in the morning of the 20th, intelligence was brought that the enemy, with two hundred boats, had crossed the river and landed a few miles above. General Greene immediately ordered the garrison under arms, sent out troops to hold the enemy in check, and sent off an express to Washington, at Hackensack.

The enemy had crossed the Hudson, on a very rainy night, in two divisions, one diagonally upward from King's Bridge, landing on the west side, about eight o'clock; the other marched up the east bank three or four miles, and then

crossed to the opposite shore. The whole corps, six thousand strong, and under the command of Lord Cornwallis, were landed, with their cannon, by ten o'clock, at a place called Closter Dock, five or six miles above Fort Lee, and under that line of lofty and perpendicular cliffs known as the Palisades. "The seamen," says Sir William Howe, "distinguished themselves remarkably on this occasion, by their readiness to drag their cannon up a very narrow road, for nearly half a mile; to the top of a precipice which bounds the shore for some miles on the west side." *

Washington arrived at the fort in three-quarters of an hour. Being told that the enemy were extending themselves across the country, he at once saw that they intended to form a line from the Hudson to the Hackensack, and hem the whole garrison in between the two rivers. Nothing would save it but a prompt retreat to secure the bridge over the Hackensack. No time was to be lost. The troops sent out to check the enemy were recalled. The retreat commenced in all haste. There was a want of horses and wagons; a great quantity of baggage, stores and provisions, therefore, was abandoned. So was all the artillery, excepting two twelve-pounders: even the tents were left standing, and camp-kettles on the fire. With all their speed they did not reach the Hackensack River before the vanguard of the enemy was close upon them. Expecting a brush, the greater part hurried over the bridge, others crossed at the ferry, and some higher up. The enemy, however, did not dispute the

* Some writers have stated that Cornwallis crossed on the 18th. They have been misled by a letter of Sir William Howe, which gives that date. Lord Howe, in a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty, gives the date we have stated (the 20th), which is the true one.

passage of the river; but Cornwallis stated in his dispatches that, had not the Americans been apprised of his approach, he would have surrounded them at the fort. Some of his troops that night occupied the tents they had abandoned.

From Hackensack, Colonel Grayson, one of Washington's aides-de-camp, wrote instantly, by his orders, to General Lee; informing him that the enemy had crossed into the Jerseys, and, as was reported, *in great numbers.* "His Excellency," adds Grayson, "thinks it would be advisable in you to remove the troops under your command on this side of the North River, and there wait for further commands."

Washington himself wrote to Lee on the following day (Nov. 21st). "I am of opinion," said he, "and the gentlemen about me concur in it, that the public interest requires your coming over to this side of the Hudson with the Continental troops. . . . The enemy is evidently changing the seat of war to this side of the North River, and the inhabitants of this country will expect the Continental army to give them what support they can; and, failing in that, they will cease to depend upon, or support a force from which no protection is derived. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that at least an appearance of force should be made to keep this province in connection with the others."

In this moment of hurry and agitation, Colonel Reed, also, Washington's *fidus Achates*, wrote to Lee, but in a tone and spirit that may surprise the reader, knowing the devotion he had hitherto manifested for the commander-in-chief. After expressing the common wish that Lee should be at the principal scene of action, he adds: "I do not mean to flatter or praise you, at the expense of any other; but I do think that it is entirely owing to you that this army and the

liberties of America, so far as they are dependent on it, are not entirely cut off. You have decision, a quality often wanting in minds otherwise valuable, and I ascribe to this our escape from York Island, King's Bridge and the Plains; and I have no doubt, had you been here, the garrison of Mount Washington would now have composed a part of this army; and from all these circumstances, I confess, I do ardently wish to see you removed from a place where there will be so little call for your judgment and experience, to the place where they are likely to be so necessary. Nor am I singular in my opinion; every gentleman of the family, the officers and soldiers generally, have a confidence in you. The enemy constantly inquire where you are, and seem to be less confident when you are present."

Then alluding to the late affair at Fort Washington, he continues: "General Washington's own judgment, seconded by representations from us, would, I believe, have saved the men and their arms; but, unluckily, General Greene's judgment was contrary. This kept the general's mind in a state of suspense till the stroke was struck. Oh, general! An indecisive mind is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall an army; how often have I lamented it this campaign. All circumstances considered, we are in a very awful and alarming situation; one that requires the utmost wisdom and firmness of mind. As soon as the season will admit, I think yourself and some others should go to Congress and form the plan of the new army. . . . I must conclude, with my clear and explicit opinion, that your presence is of the last importance." *

Well might Washington apprehend that his character

* Memoirs of Reed, i. 255.

and conduct, in the perplexities in which he was placed, would be liable to be misunderstood by the public, when the friend of his bosom could so misjudge him.

Reed had evidently been dazzled by the daring spirit and unscrupulous policy of Lee, who in carrying out his measures heeded but little the counsels of others, or even the orders of government; Washington's respect for both, and the caution with which he hesitated in adopting measures in opposition to them, was stamped by the bold soldier and his admirers as indecision.

At Hackensack the army did not exceed three thousand men, and they were dispirited by ill success and the loss of tents and baggage. They were without intrenching tools, in a flat country, where there were no natural fastnesses. Washington resolved, therefore, to avoid any attack from the enemy, though, by so doing, he must leave a fine and fertile region open to their ravages; or a plentiful storehouse from which they would draw voluntary supplies. A second move was necessary, again to avoid the danger of being inclosed between two rivers. Leaving three regiments, therefore, to guard the passes of the Hackensack, and serve as covering parties, he again decamped, and threw himself on the west bank of the Passaic, in the neighborhood of Newark.

His army, small as it was, would soon be less. The term of enlistment of those under General Mercer, from the flying camp, was nearly expired; and it was not probable that, disheartened as they were by defeats and losses, exposed to inclement weather, and unaccustomed to military hardships, they would longer forego the comforts of their homes, to drag out the residue of a ruinous campaign.

In addition, too, to the superiority of the force that was following him, the rivers gave the enemy facilities, by means

of their shipping, to throw troops in his rear. In this extremity he cast about in every direction for assistance. Colonel Reed, on whom he relied as on a second self, was dispatched to Burlington with a letter to Governor William Livingston, describing his hazardous situation, and entreating him to call out a portion of the New Jersey militia; and General Mifflin was sent to Philadelphia to implore immediate aid from Congress and the local authorities.

His main reliance for prompt assistance, however, was upon Lee. On the 24th came a letter from that general, addressed to Colonel Reed. Washington opened it, as he was accustomed to do, in the absence of that officer, with letters addressed to him on the business of the army. Lee was at his old encampment at Northcastle. He had no means, he said, of crossing at Dobbs' Ferry, and the round by King's Ferry would be so great that he could not get there in time to answer any purpose. "I have, therefore," added he, "ordered General Heath, who is close to the only ferry which can be passed, to detach two thousand men to apprise his Excellency and await his further orders; a mode which I flatter myself will answer better what I conceive to be the spirit of the orders than should I move the corps from hence. Withdrawing our troops from hence would be attended with some very serious consequences, which at present would be tedious to enumerate; as to myself," adds he, "I hope to set out to-morrow."

A letter of the same date (Nov 23d), from Lee to James Bowdoin, president of the Massachusetts council, may throw some light on his motives for delaying to obey the orders of the commander-in-chief. "Before the unfortunate affair of Fort Washington," writes he, "it was my opinion that the two armies—that on the east and that on the west side of

the North River—must rest each on its own bottom; that the idea of detaching and re-enforcing from one side to the other, on every motion of the enemy, was chimerical; but to harbor such a thought in our present circumstances is absolute insanity. In this invasion, should the enemy alter the present direction of their operations and attempt to open the passage of the Highlands, or enter New England, I should never entertain the thought of being succored by the western army. I know it is impossible. We must, therefore, depend upon ourselves. To Connecticut and Massachusetts I shall look for assistance. . . . I hope the cursed job of Fort Washington will occasion no dejection: the place itself was of no value. For my own part, I am persuaded that if we only act with common sense, spirit, and decision, the day must be our own."

In another letter to Bowdoin, dated on the following day, and inclosing an extract from Washington's letter of November 21st, he writes: "Indecision bids fair for tumbling down the goodly fabric of American freedom, and, with it, the rights of mankind. 'Twas indecision of Congress prevented our having a noble army, and on an excellent footing. 'Twas indecision in our military councils which cost us the garrison of Fort Washington, the consequence of which must be fatal, unless remedied in time by a contrary spirit. Inclosed I send you an extract of a letter from the general, on which you will make your comments; and I have no doubt you will concur with me in the necessity of raising immediately an army to save us from perdition. Affairs appear in so important a crisis that I think the resolves of the Congress must no longer too nicely weigh with us. We must save the community, in spite of the ordinances of the legislature. There are times when we must commit treason against the laws of

the State for the salvation of the State. The present crisis demands this brave, virtuous kind of treason." He urges President Bowdoin, therefore, to waive all formalities, and not only complete the regiments prescribed to the province, but to add four companies to each regiment. "We must not only have a force sufficient to cover your province and all these fertile districts from the insults and irruptions of the tyrant's troops, but sufficient to drive 'em out of all their quarters in the Jerseys, or all is lost. . . . In the meantime, send up a formidable body of militia to supply the place of the Continental troops which I am ordered to convey over the river. Let your people be well supplied with blankets and warm clothes, as I am determined, by the help of God, to unnest 'em, even in the dead of winter." *

It is evident Lee considered Washington's star to be on the decline, and his own in the ascendant. The "affair of Fort Washington" and the "indecision of the commander-in-chief" were apparently his watchwords.

On the following day (24th) he writes to Washington from Northcastle, on the subject of removing troops across the Hudson. "I have received your orders, and shall endeavor to put them in execution, but question whether I shall be able to carry with me any considerable number; not so much from want of zeal in the men as from their wretched condition with respect to shoes, stockings, and blankets, which the present bad weather renders more intolerable. I sent Heath orders to transport two thousand men across the river, apprise the general, and wait for further orders; but that great man (as I might have expected) intrenched himself within the letter of his instructions and refused to part

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 811.

with a single file, though I undertook to replace them with a part of my own." He concludes by showing that, so far from hurrying to the support of his commander-in-chief, he was meditating a side blow of his own devising. "I shall march this day with Glover's brigade; but have just received intelligence that Rogers' corps, a part of the light-horse, and another brigade lie in so exposed a situation as to present us the fairest opportunity of carrying them off. If we succeed, it will have a great effect, and amply compensate for two days' delay."

Scarce had Lee sent this letter when he received one from Washington, informing him that he had mistaken his views in regard to the troops required to cross the Hudson; it was his (Lee's) division that he wanted to have over. The force under Heath must remain to guard the posts and passes through the Highlands, the importance of which was so infinitely great that there should not be the least possible risk of losing them. In the same letter Washington, who presumed Lee was by this time at Peekskill, advised him to take every precaution to come by a safe route, and by all means to keep between the enemy and the mountains, as he understood they were taking measures to intercept his march.

Lee's reply was still from Northcastle. He explained that his idea of detaching troops from Heath's division was merely for expedition's sake, intending to replace them from his own. The want of carriages and other causes had delayed him. From the force of the enemy remaining in Westchester County, he did not conceive the number of them in the Jerseys to be near so great as Washington was taught to believe. He had been making a sweep of the country to clear it of the tories. Part of his army had now moved on,

and he would set out on the following day. He concluded with the assurance, "I shall take care to obey your Excellency's orders in regard to my march as exactly as possible."

On the same day he vents his spleen in a tart letter to Heath. "I perceive," writes he, "that you have formed an idea that, should General Washington remove to the Straits of Magellan, the instructions he left with you, upon a particular occasion, have, to all intents and purposes, invested you with a command separate from and independent of any other superiors. . . . That General Heath is by no means to consider himself obliged to obey the second in command." He concluded by informing him that, as the commander-in-chief was now separated from them, he (Lee) commanded, of course, on this side of the water, and for the future would and must be obeyed.

Before receiving this letter Heath, doubtful whether Washington might not be pressed, and desirous of having his troops across the Hudson, had sent off an express to him for explicit instructions on that point, and, in the meantime, had kept them ready for a move.

General George Clinton, who was with him, and had the safety of the Hudson at heart, was in an agony of solicitude. "We have been under marching orders these three days past," writes he, "and only await the directions of General Washington. Should they be to move, all's over with the river this season, and, I fear, forever. General Lee, four or five days ago, had orders to move with his division across the river. Instead of so doing, he ordered General Heath to march his men through, and he would replace them with so many of his. General Heath could not do this consistent with his instructions, but put his men under marching orders to wait his Excellency's orders."

Honest George Clinton was still perplexed and annoyed by these marchings and countermarchings; and especially with these incessant retreats. "A strange way of cooking business!" writes he. "We have no particular accounts yet from headquarters, *but I am apt to believe retreating is yet fashionable.*"

The return of the express sent to Washington relieved Clinton's anxiety about the Highlands; reiterating the original order that the division under Heath should remain for the protection of the passes.

Washington was still at Newark when, on the 27th, he received Lee's letter of the 24th, speaking of his scheme of capturing Rogers the partisan. Under other circumstances it might have been a sufficient excuse for his delay, but higher interests were at stake; he immediately wrote to Lee as follows: "My former letters were so full and explicit as to the necessity of your marching as early as possible that it is unnecessary to add more on that head. I confess I expected you would have been sooner in motion. The force here, when joined by yours, will not be adequate to any great opposition; at present it is weak, and it has been more owing to the badness of the weather that the enemy's progress has been checked than any resistance we could make. They are now pushing this way—part of 'em have passed the Passaic. Their plan is not entirely unfolded, but I shall not be surprised if Philadelphia should turn out the object of their movement."

The situation of the little army was daily becoming more perilous. In a council of war, several of the members urged a move to Morristown, to form a junction with the troops expected from the Northern army. Washington, however, still cherished the idea of making a stand at Brunswick on

the Raritan, or, at all events, of disputing the passage of the Delaware; and in this intrepid resolution he was warmly seconded by Greene.

Breaking up his camp once more, therefore, he continued his retreat toward New Brunswick; but so close was Cornwallis upon him that his advance entered one end of Newark just as the American rear-guard had left the other.

From New Brunswick, Washington wrote on the 29th to William Livingston, governor of the Jerseys, requesting him to have all boats and river craft for seventy miles along the Delaware removed to the western bank out of the reach of the enemy, and put under guard. He was disappointed in his hope of making a stand on the banks of the Raritan. All the force he could muster at Brunswick, including the New Jersey militia, did not exceed four thousand men. Colonel Reed had failed in procuring aid from the New Jersey Legislature. That body, shifted from place to place, was on the eve of dissolution. The term of the Maryland and New Jersey troops in the flying camp had expired. General Mercer endeavored to retain them, representing the disgrace of turning their back upon the cause when the enemy was at hand; his remonstrances were fruitless. As to the Pennsylvania levies, they deserted in such numbers that guards were stationed on the roads and ferries to intercept them.

At this moment of care and perplexity a letter, forwarded by express, arrived at headquarters. It was from General Lee, dated from his camp at Northcastle, to Colonel Reed, and was in reply to the letter written by that officer from Hackensack on the 21st, which we have already laid before the reader. Supposing that it related to official business, Washington opened it, and read as follows:

"My dear Reed—I received your most obliging, flattering letter; lament with you that fatal indecision of mind, which in war is a much greater disqualification than stupidity, or even want of personal courage. Accident may put a decisive blunderer in the right; but eternal defeat and miscarriage must attend the man of the best parts, if cursed with indecision. The general recommends in so pressing a manner as almost to amount to an order, to bring over the Continental troops under my command; which recommendation, or order, throws me into the greatest dilemma from several considerations." After stating these considerations, he adds: "My reason for not having marched already is, that we have just received intelligence that Rogers' corps, the light-horse, part of the Highlanders and another brigade, lie in so exposed a situation as to give the fairest opportunity of being carried. I should have attempted it last night, but the rain was too violent, and when our pieces are wet you know our troops are *hors du combat*. This night I hope will be better. . . . I only wait myself for this business of Rogers and company being over. I shall then fly to you; for, to confess a truth, I really think our chief will do better with me than without me."

A glance over this letter sufficed to show Washington that, at this dark moment, when he most needed support and sympathy, his character and military conduct were the subject of disparaging comments between the friend in whom he had so implicitly confided, and a sarcastic and apparently self-constituted rival. Whatever may have been his feelings of wounded pride and outraged friendship, he restrained them, and inclosed the letter to Reed, with the following chilling note:

"DEAR SIR—The inclosed was put into my hands by an express from White Plains. Having no idea of its being a private letter, much less suspecting the tendency of the correspondence, I opened it; as I have done all other letters to you from the same place and Peekskill, upon the business of your office, as I conceived and found them to be. This, as it is the truth, must be my excuse for seeing the contents of a letter which neither inclination nor intention would have prompted me to," etc.

The very calmness and coldness of this note must have had a greater effect upon Reed than could have been produced by the most vehement reproaches. In subsequent communications he endeavored to explain away the offensive paragraphs in Lee's letter, declaring there was nothing in his own inconsistent with the respect and affection he had ever borne for Washington's person and character.

Fortunately for Reed, Washington never saw that letter. There were passages in it beyond the reach of softening or explanation. As it was, the purport of it, as reflected in Lee's reply, had given him a sufficient shock. His magnanimous nature, however, was incapable of harboring long resentments; especially in matters relating solely to himself. His personal respect for Colonel Reed continued; he invariably manifested a high sense of his merits, and consulted him, as before, on military affairs; but his hitherto affectionate confidence in him, as a sympathizing friend, had received an incurable wound. His letters, before so frequent, and such perfect outpourings of heart and mind, became few and far between, and confined to matters of business.

It must have been consoling to Washington, at this mo-

ment of bitterness, to receive the following letter (dated Nov. 27th) from William Livingston, the intelligent and patriotic governor of New Jersey. It showed that while many misjudged him, and friends seemed falling from his side, others appreciated him truly, and the ordeal he was undergoing.

"I can easily form some idea of the difficulties under which you labor," writes Livingston, "particularly of one for which the public can make no allowance, because your prudence and fidelity to the cause will not suffer you to reveal it to the public; an instance of magnanimity superior, perhaps, to any that can be shown in battle. But depend upon it, my dear sir, the impartial world will do you ample justice before long. May God support you under the fatigue, both of body and mind, to which you must be constantly exposed." *

Washington lingered at Brunswick until the 1st of December, in the vain hope of being re-enforced. The enemy, in the meantime, advanced through the country, impressing wagons and horses, and collecting cattle and sheep, as if for a distant march. At length their vanguard appeared on the opposite side of the Raritan. Washington immediately broke down the end of the bridge next the village, and after night-

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* We cannot dismiss this painful incident in Washington's life without a prospective note on the subject. Reed was really of too generous and intelligent a nature not to be aware of the immense value of the friendship he had put at hazard. He grieved over his mistake, especially as after events showed more and more the majestic greatness of Washington's character. A letter in the following year, in which he sought to convince Washington of his sincere and devoted attachment, is really touching in its appeals. We are happy to add that it appears to have been successful, and to have restored, in a great measure, their relations of friendly confidence.

fall resumed his retreat. In the meantime, as the river was fordable, Captain Alexander Hamilton planted his field-pieces on high, commanding ground, and opened a spirited fire to check any attempt of the enemy to cross.

At Princeton, Washington left twelve hundred men in two brigades, under Lord Stirling and General Adam Stephen, to cover the country and watch the motions of the enemy. Stephen was the same officer that had served as a colonel under Washington in the French war, as second in command of the Virginia troops, and had charge of Fort Cumberland. In consideration of his courage and military capacity, he had, in 1764, been intrusted with the protection of the frontier. He had recently brought a detachment of Virginia troops to the army, and received from Congress, in September, the commission of brigadier-general.

The harassed army reached Trenton on the 2d of December. Washington immediately proceeded to remove his baggage and stores across the Delaware. In his letters from this place to the President of Congress, he gives his reasons for his continued retreat. "Nothing but necessity obliged me to retire before the enemy and leave so much of the Jerseys unprotected. Sorry am I to observe that the frequent calls upon the militia of this State, the want of exertion in the principal gentlemen of the country, and a fatal supineness and insensibility of danger, till it is too late to prevent an evil that was not only foreseen, but foretold, have been the causes of our late disgraces.

"If the militia of this State had stepped forth in season (and timely notice they had), we might have prevented the enemy's crossing the Hackensack. We might, with equal possibility of success, have made a stand at Brunswick on the Raritan. But as both these rivers were fordable in a variety

of places, being knee deep only, it required many men to guard the passes, and these we had not."

In excuse for the people of New Jersey, it may be observed that they inhabited an open, agricultural country, where the sound of war had never been heard. Many of them looked upon the Revolution as rebellion; others thought it a ruined enterprise; the armies engaged in it had been defeated and broken up. They beheld the commander-in-chief retreating through their country with a handful of men, weary, wayworn, dispirited; without tents, without clothing, many of them barefooted, exposed to wintry weather, and driven from post to post by a well-clad, well-fed, triumphant force, tricked out in all the glittering bravery of war. Could it be wondered at that peaceful husbandmen, seeing their quiet fields thus suddenly overrun by adverse hosts, and their very hearthstones threatened with outrage, should, instead of flying to arms, seek for the safety of their wives and little ones, and the protection of their humble means, from the desolation which too often marks the course even of friendly armies?

Lord Howe and his brother sought to profit by this dismay and despondency. A proclamation, dated 30th of November, commanded all persons in arms against his majesty's government to disband and return home, and all Congresses to desist from treasonable acts: offering a free pardon to all who should comply within fifty days.

Many who had been prominent in the cause hastened to take advantage of this proclamation. Those who had most property to lose were the first to submit. The middle ranks remained generally steadfast in this time of trial.*

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* Gordon's Hist. Am. War, ii. 129.

The following extract of a letter from a field-officer in New York, dated December 2d, to his friend in London, gives the British view of affairs: "The rebels continue flying before our army. Lord Cornwallis took the fort opposite Brunswick, plunged into Raritan River and seized the town. Mr. Washington had orders from the Congress to rally and defend that post, but he sent them word he could not. He was seen retreating with two brigades to Trenton, where they talk of resisting; but such a panic has seized the rebels that no part of the Jerseys will hold them, and I doubt whether Philadelphia itself will stop their career. The Congress have lost their authority. . . . They are in such consternation that they know not what to do. The two Adamses are in New England; Franklin gone to France; Lynch has lost his senses; Rutledge has gone home disgusted; Dana is persecuting at Albany, and Jay's in the country playing as bad a part; so that the fools have lost the assistance of the knaves. However, should they embrace the inclosed proclamation, they may yet escape the halter. . . . Honest David Mathew, the mayor, has made his escape from them, and arrived here this day." *

In this dark day of peril to the cause and to himself, Washington remained firm and undaunted. In casting about for some stronghold, where he might make a desperate stand for the liberties of his country, his thoughts reverted to the mountain regions of his early campaigns. General Mercer was at hand, who had shared his perils among these mountains, and his presence may have contributed to bring them to his mind. "What think you," said Washington; "if we should retreat to the back parts of Pennsylvania, would the Pennsylvanians support us?"

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1037.

"If the lower counties give up, the back counties will do the same," was the discouraging reply.

"We must then retire to Augusta County, in Virginia," said Washington. "Numbers will repair to us for safety, and we will try a predatory war. If overpowered, we must cross the Alleghenies."

Such was the indomitable spirit, rising under difficulties, and buoyant in the darkest moment, that kept our tempest-tossed cause from foundering.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

Lee at Peekskill—Stanch adherence of Heath to Orders—Lee crosses the Hudson—Washington at Trenton—Lee at the Heels of the Enemy—His Speculations on Military Greatness—Forced March of Cornwallis—Washington crosses the Delaware—Putnam in Command at Philadelphia—Baffling Letters of Lee—Hopes to reconquer the Jerseys—Gates on the March—Lee quartered at Baskingridge—Surprised and Captured—Speculations on his Conduct

NOTWITHSTANDING the repeated and pressing orders and entreaties of the commander-in-chief, Lee did not reach Peekskill until the 30th of November. In a letter of that date to Washington, who had complained of his delay, he simply alleges difficulties, which he would explain *when both had leisure.* His scheme to entrap Rogers, the renegade, had failed; the old Indian hunter had been too much on the alert; he boasted, however, to have rendered more service by his delay than he would have done had he moved sooner. His forces were thereby augmented, so that he expected to enter the Jerseys with four thousand firm and willing men, who would make *a very important diversion.*

"The day after to-morrow," added he, "we shall pass the river, when I should be glad to receive your instructions; but I could wish you would bind me as little as possible; not from any opinion, I do assure you, of my own parts, but from a persuasion that detached generals cannot have too great latitude unless they are very incompetent indeed."

Lee had calculated upon meeting no further difficulty in obtaining men from Heath. He rode to that general's quarters in the evening, and was invited by him to alight and take tea. On entering the house Lee took Heath aside, and alluding to his former refusal to supply troops as being inconsistent with the orders of the commander-in-chief, "in point of *law*," said he, "you are right, but in point of policy I think you are wrong. I am going into the Jerseys for the salvation of America; I wish to take with me a larger force than I now have, and request you to order two thousand of your men to march with me."

Heath answered that he could not spare that number. He was then asked to order one thousand; to which he replied that the business might as well be brought to a point at once—that not a single man should march from the post by *his* order. "Then," exclaimed Lee, "I will order them myself." "That makes a wide difference," rejoined Heath. "You are my senior, but I have received positive written instructions from him who is superior to us both, and I will not *myself* break those orders." In proof of his words, Heath produced the recent letter received from Washington, repeating his former orders that no troops should be removed from that post. Lee glanced over the letter. "The commander-in-chief is now at a distance, and does not know what is necessary here so well as I do." He asked a sight of the return book of the division. It was brought by Major

Huntington, the deputy adjutant-general. Lee ran his eye over it, and chose two regiments. "You will order them to march early to-morrow morning to join me," said he to the major. Heath, ruffling with the pride of military law, turned to the major with an air of authority. "Issue such orders at your peril!" exclaimed he: then addressing Lee, "Sir," said he, "if you come to this post and mean to issue orders here which will break the positive ones I have received, I pray you do it completely yourself, and through your own deputy adjutant-general, who is present, and not draw me or any of my family in as partners in the guilt."

"It is right," said Lee; "Colonel Scammel, do you issue the order." It was done accordingly; but Heath's punctilious scruples were not yet satisfied. "I have one more request to make, sir," said he to Lee, "and that is, that you will be pleased to give me a certificate that you *exercise command* at this post, and order from it these regiments."

Lee hesitated to comply, but George Clinton, who was present, told him he could not refuse a request so reasonable. He accordingly wrote, "For the satisfaction of General Heath, and at his request, I do certify that I am commanding officer, at this present writing, in this post, and that I have, in that capacity, ordered Prescott's and Wyllis's regiments to march."

Heath's military punctilio was satisfied, and he smoothed his ruffled plumes. Early the next morning the regiments moved from their cantonments ready to embark, when Lee again rode up to his door. "Upon further consideration," said he, "I have concluded not to take the two regiments with me—you may order them to return to their former post."

"This conduct of General Lee," adds Heath in his Me-

moirs, "appeared not a little extraordinary, and one is almost at a loss to account for it. He had been a soldier from his youth, and had a perfect knowledge of service in all its branches, but was rather obstinate in his temper, and could scarcely brook being crossed in anything in the line of his profession." *

It was not until the 4th of December that Lee crossed the Hudson, and began a laggard march, though aware of the imminent peril of Washington and his army—how different from the celerity of his movements in his expedition to the South!

In the meantime, Washington, who was at Trenton, had profited by a delay of the enemy at Brunswick, and removed most of the stores and baggage of the army across the Delaware; and, being re-enforced by fifteen hundred of the Pennsylvania militia, procured by Mifflin, prepared to face about and march back to Princeton with such of his troops as were fit for service, there to be governed by circumstances and the movements of General Lee. Accordingly, on the 5th of December, he sent about twelve hundred men in the advance to re-enforce Lord Stirling, and the next day set off himself with the residue.

"The general has gone forward to Princeton," writes Colonel Reed, "where there are about three thousand men, with which, I fear, he will not be able to make any stand." †

While on the march, Washington received a letter from Greene, who was at Princeton, informing him of a report that Lee was "at the heels of the enemy." "I should think," adds Greene, "he had better keep on the flanks than

* The above scene is given almost literally from General Heath's Memoirs.

† Reed to the President of Congress.

the rear, unless it were possible to concert an attack at the same instant of time in front and rear. . . . I think General Lee must be confined within the lines of some general plan, or else his operations will be independent of yours. His own troops, General St. Clair's, and the militia, must form a respectable army."

Lee had no idea of conforming to a general plan; he had an independent plan of his own, and was at that moment at Pompton, indulging speculations on military greatness, and the lamentable want of it in his American contemporaries. In a letter from that place to Governor Cooke of Rhode Island he imparts his notions on the subject. "Theory joined to practice, or a heaven-born genius, can alone constitute a general. As to the latter, God Almighty indulges the modern world very rarely with the spectacle; and I do not know, from what I have seen, that He has been more profuse of this ethereal spirit to the Americans than to other nations."

While Lee was thus loitering and speculating, Cornwallis, knowing how far he was in the rear, and how weak was the situation of Washington's army, and being himself strongly re-enforced, made a forced march from Brunswick and was within two miles of Princeton. Stirling, to avoid being surrounded, immediately set out with two brigades for Trenton. Washington, too, receiving intelligence by express of these movements, hastened back to that place, and caused boats to be collected from all quarters, and the stores and troops transported across the Delaware. He himself crossed with the rear-guard on Sunday morning, and took up his quarters about a mile from the river; causing the boats to be destroyed and troops to be posted opposite the fords. He was conscious, however, as he said, that with his small force he could make no great opposition, should the

enemy bring boats with them. Fortunately, they did not come thus provided.

The rear-guard, says an American account, had barely crossed the river when Lord Cornwallis "came marching down with all the pomp of war, in great expectation of getting boats and immediately pursuing." Not one was to be had there or elsewhere; for Washington had caused the boats, for an extent of seventy miles up and down the river, to be secured on the right bank. His lordship was effectually brought to a stand. He made some moves with two columns as if he would cross the Delaware above and below, either to push on to Philadelphia, or to entrap Washington in the acute angle made by the bend of the river opposite Bordentown. An able disposition of American troops along the upper part of the river, and of a number of galleys below, discouraged any attempt of the kind. Cornwallis, therefore, gave up the pursuit, distributed the German troops in cantonments along the left bank of the river, and stationed his main force at Brunswick, trusting to be able before long to cross the Delaware on the ice.

On the 8th, Washington wrote to the President of Congress: "There is not a moment's time to be lost in assembling such a force as can be collected, as the object of the enemy cannot now be doubted in the smallest degree. Indeed, I shall be out in my conjecture, for it is only conjecture, if the late embarkation at New York is not for Delaware River, to co-operate with the army under General Howe, who, I am informed from good authority, is with the British troops, and his whole force upon this route. I have no certain intelligence of General Lee, although I have sent expresses to him, and lately a Colonel Humpton, to bring me some accurate accounts of his situation. I last night dis-

patched another gentleman to him (Major Hoops), desiring he would hasten his march to the Delaware, on which I would provide boats near a place called Alexandria, for the transportation of his troops. I cannot account for the slowness of his march."

In further letters to Lee, Washington urged the peril of Philadelphia. "Do come on," writes he; "your arrival may be fortunate, and, if it can be effected without delay, it may be the means of preserving a city whose loss must prove of the most fatal consequence to the cause of America."

Putnam was now detached to take command of Philadelphia and put it in a state of defense, and General Mifflin to have charge of the munitions of war deposited there. By their advice, Congress hastily adjourned on the 12th of December, to meet again on the 20th, at Baltimore.

Washington's whole force at this time was about five thousand five hundred men; one thousand of them Jersey militia, fifteen hundred militia from Philadelphia, and a battalion of five hundred of the German yeomanry of Pennsylvania. Gates, however, he was informed, was coming on with seven regiments detached by Schuyler from the Northern department; re-enforced by these and the troops under Lee, he hoped to be able to attempt a stroke upon the enemy's forces, which lay a good deal scattered, and, to all appearances, in a state of security. "A lucky blow in this quarter," writes he, "would be fatal to them, and would most certainly raise the spirits of the people, which are quite sunk by our late misfortunes." *

While cheering himself with these hopes, and trusting to speedy aid from Lee, that wayward commander, though

* Washington to Governor Trumbull, 14th December.

nearly three weeks had elapsed since he had received Washington's orders and entreaties to join him with all possible dispatch, was no further on his march than Morristown, in the Jerseys; where, with militia recruits, his force was about four thousand men. In a letter written by him on the 8th of December to a committee of Congress, he says: "If I was not taught to think the army with General Washington had been considerably re-enforced I should immediately join him; but as I am assured he is very strong, I should imagine we can make a better impression by beating up and harassing their detached parties in their rear, for which purpose a good post at Chatham seems the best calculated. It is a happy distance from Newark, Elizabethtown, Woodbridge and Boundbrook. We shall, I expect, annoy, distract, and consequently weaken them in a desultory war." *

On the same day he writes from Chatham, in reply to Washington's letter by Major Hoops, just received: "I am extremely shocked to hear that your force is so inadequate to the necessity of your situation, as I had been taught to think you had been considerably re-enforced. Your last letters, proposing a plan of surprises and forced marches, convinced me that there was no danger of your being obliged to pass the Delaware; in consequence of which proposals I have put myself in a position the most convenient to co-operate with you, by attacking their rear. I cannot persuade myself that Philadelphia is their object at present. . . . It will be difficult, I am afraid, to join you; but cannot I do you more service by attacking their rear?"

This letter, sent by a light-horseman, received an instant reply from Washington. "'Philadelphia, beyond all ques-

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1121.

tion, is the object of the enemy's movements, and nothing less than our utmost exertions will prevent General Howe from possessing it. The force I have is weak, and utterly incompetent to that end. I must, therefore, entreat you to push on with every possible succor you can bring." *

On the 9th, Lee, who was at Chatham, received information from Heath that three of the regiments detached under Gates from the Northern army had arrived from Albany at Peekskill. He instantly writes to him to forward them, without loss of time, to Morristown: "I am in hopes," adds he, "to reconquer (if I may so express myself) the Jerseys. It was really in the hands of the enemy before my arrival."

On the 11th, Lee writes to Washington from Morristown, where he says his troops had been obliged to halt two days for want of shoes. He now talked of crossing the great Brunswick post road, and, by a forced night's march, making his way to the ferry above Burlington, where boats should be sent up from Philadelphia to receive him.

"I am much surprised," writes Washington in reply, "that you should be in any doubt respecting the road you should take, after the information you have received upon that head. A large number of boats was procured, and is still retained at Tinicum, under a strong guard, to facilitate your passage across the Delaware. I have so frequently mentioned our situation and the necessity of your aid, that it is painful for me to add a word on the subject. . . . Congress have directed Philadelphia to be defended to the last extremity. The fatal consequences that must attend its loss are but too obvious to every one; your arrival may be the means of saving it."

In detailing the close of General Lee's march, so extraor-

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1138.

dinary for its tardiness, we shall avail ourselves of the memoir already cited of General Wilkinson, who was at that time a brigade major, about twenty-two years of age, and was accompanying General Gates, who had been detached by Schuyler with seven regiments to re-enforce Washington. Three of these regiments, as we have shown, had descended the Hudson to Peekskill, and were ordered by Lee to Morristown. Gates had embarked with the remaining four, and landed with them at Esopus, whence he took a back route by the Delaware and the Minisink.

On the 11th of December he was detained by a heavy snowstorm, in a sequestered valley near the Wallpeck in New Jersey. Being cut off from all information respecting the adverse armies, he detached Major Wilkinson to seek Washington's camp, with a letter, stating the force under his command, and inquiring what route he should take. Wilkinson crossed the hills on horseback to Sussex court-house, took a guide and proceeded down the country. Washington, he soon learned, had passed the Delaware several days before; the boats, he was told, had been removed from the ferries, so that he would find some difficulty in getting over, but Major-general Lee was at Morristown. Finding such obstacles in his way to the commander-in-chief, he determined to seek the second in command, and ask orders from him for General Gates. Lee had decamped from Morristown on the 12th of December, but had marched no further than Vealtown, barely eight miles distant. There he left General Sullivan with the troops, while he took up his quarters three miles off, at a tavern, at Baskingridge. As there was not a British cantonment within twenty miles, he took but a small guard for his protection, thinking himself perfectly secure.

About four o'clock in the morning Wilkinson arrived at his quarters. He was presented to the general as he lay in bed, and delivered into his hands the letter of General Gates. Lee, observing it was addressed to Washington, declined opening it, until apprised by Wilkinson of its contents and the motives of his visit. He then broke the seal, and recommended Wilkinson to take repose. The latter lay down on his blanket, before a comfortable fire, among the officers of his suite; "for we were not encumbered in those days," says he, "with beds or baggage."

Lee, naturally indolent, lingered in bed until eight o'clock. He then came down in his usual slovenly style, half-dressed, in slippers and blanket coat, his collar open, and his linen apparently of some days' wear. After some inquiries about the campaign in the North, he gave Wilkinson a brief account of the operations of the main army, which he condemned in strong terms, and in his usual sarcastic way. He wasted the morning in altercation with some of the militia, particularly the Connecticut light-horse; "several of whom," says Wilkinson, "appeared in large, full-bottomed perukes, and were treated very irreverently. One wanted forage, another his horse shod, another his pay, a fourth provisions, etc.; to which the general replied, 'Your wants are numerous; but you have not mentioned the last—you want to go home, and shall be indulged; for, d— you, you do no good here.' "

Colonel Scammel, the adjutant-general, called from General Sullivan for orders concerning the morning's march. After musing a moment or two, Lee asked if he had a manuscript map of the country. It was produced, and spread upon a table. Wilkinson observed Lee trace with his finger the route from Vealtown to Pluckamin, thence to Somerset

court-house, and on, by Rocky Hill, to Princeton; he then returned to Pluckamin, and traced the route in the same manner by Boundbrook to Brunswick, and after a close inspection, carelessly said to Scammel, "Tell General Sullivan to move down toward Pluckamin; that I will soon be with him." This, observes Wilkinson, was off his route to Alexandria on the Delaware, where he had been ordered to cross, and directly on that toward Brunswick and Princeton. He was convinced, therefore, that Lee meditated an attack on the British post at the latter place.

From these various delays they did not sit down to breakfast before ten o'clock. After breakfast, Lee sat writing a reply to General Gates, in which, as usual, he indulged in sarcastic comments on the commander-in-chief. "The ingenious maneuver of Fort Washington," writes he, "has completely unhinged the goodly fabric we had been building. There never was so d—d a stroke; *entre nous*, a certain great man is most damnably deficient. He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties: if I stay in this province I risk myself and army; and if I do not stay, the province is lost forever. . . . As to what relates to yourself, if you think you can be in time to aid the general, I would have you by all means go; you will at least save your army," etc.*

While Lee was writing, Wilkinson was looking out of a window down a lane, about a hundred yards in length, leading from the house to the main road. Suddenly a party of British dragoons turned a corner of the avenue at a full charge. "Here, sir, are the British cavalry!" exclaimed Wilkinson. "Where?" replied Lee, who had just signed his

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1201.

letter. "Around the house!"—for they had opened file and surrounded it. "Where is the guard? d— the guard, why don't they fire?" Then, after a momentary pause—"Do, sir, see what has become of the guard."

The guards, alas! unwary as their general, and chilled by the air of a frosty morning, had stacked their arms and repaired to the south side of a house on the opposite side of the road to sun themselves, and were now chased by the dragoons in different directions. In fact, a tory, who had visited the general the evening before to complain of the loss of a horse taken by the army, having found where Lee was to lodge and breakfast, had ridden eighteen miles in the night to Brunswick and given the information, and had piloted back Colonel Harcourt with his dragoons.*

The women of the house would fain have concealed Lee in a bed, but he rejected the proposition with disdain. Wilkinson, according to his own account, posted himself in a place where only one person could approach at a time, and there took his stand, a pistol in each hand, resolved to shoot the first and second assailant, and then appeal to his sword. While in this "unpleasant situation," as he terms it, he heard a voice declare, "If the general does not surrender in five minutes, I will set fire to the house!" After a short pause the threat was repeated, with a solemn oath. Within two minutes he heard it proclaimed, "Here is the general; he has surrendered."

There was a shout of triumph, but a great hurry to make sure of the prize before the army should arrive to the rescue. A trumpet sounded the recall to the dragoons, who were

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* Jos. Trumbull to Gov. Trumbull.—Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1265.

chasing the scattered guards. The general, bareheaded, and in his slippers and blanket coat, was mounted on Wilkinson's horse, which stood at the door, and the troop clattered off with their prisoner to Brunswick. In three hours the booming of cannon in that direction told the exultation of the enemy.* They boasted of having taken the American Palladium; for they considered Lee the most scientific and experienced of the rebel generals.

On the departure of the troops, Wilkinson, finding the coast clear, ventured from his stronghold, repaired to the stable, mounted the first horse he could find, and rode full speed in quest of General Sullivan, whom he found under march toward Pluckamin. He handed him the letter to Gates, written by Lee the moment before his capture, and still open. Sullivan, having read it, returned it to Wilkinson, and advised him to rejoin General Gates without delay: for his own part, being now in command, he changed his route, and pressed forward to join the commander-in-chief.

The loss of Lee was a severe shock to the Americans; many of whom, as we have shown, looked to him as the man who was to rescue them from their critical and well-nigh desperate situation. With their regrets, however, were mingled painful doubts, caused by his delay in obeying the repeated summons of his commander-in-chief, when the latter was in peril; and by his exposing himself so unguardedly in the very neighborhood of the enemy. Some at first suspected that he had done so designedly, and with collusion; but this was soon disproved by the indignities attending his capture, and his rigorous treatment subsequently by the Brit-

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* Jos. Trumbull to Gov. Trumbull.—Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1265.

ish; who affected to consider him a deserter, from his having formerly served in their army.

Wilkinson, who was at that time conversant with the cabals of the camp, and apparently in the confidence of some of the leaders, points out what he considers the true secret of Lee's conduct. His military reputation, originally very high, had been enhanced of late by its being generally known that he had been opposed to the occupation of Fort Washington; while the fall of that fortress and other misfortunes of the campaign, though beyond the control of the commander-in-chief, had quickened the discontent which, according to Wilkinson, had been generated against him at Cambridge, and raised a party against him in Congress. "It was confidently asserted at the time," adds he, "but it is not worthy of credit, that a motion had been made in that body tending to supersede him in the command of the army. In the temper of the times, if General Lee had anticipated General Washington in cutting the cordon of the enemy between New York and the Delaware, the commander-in-chief would probably have been superseded. In this case, Lee would have succeeded him."

What an unfortunate change would it have been for the country! Lee was undoubtedly a man of brilliant talents, shrewd sagacity, and much knowledge and experience in the art of war; but he was willful and uncertain in his temper, self-indulgent in his habits, and an egotist in warfare; boldly dashing for a soldier's glory, rather than warily acting for a country's good. He wanted those great moral qualities which, in addition to military capacity, inspired such universal confidence in the wisdom, rectitude, and patriotism of Washington, enabling him to direct and control legislative bodies as well as armies; to harmonize the jarring passions

and jealousies of a wide and imperfect confederacy, and to cope with the varied exigencies of the Revolution.

The very retreat which Washington had just effected through the Jerseys bore evidence to his generalship. Thomas Paine, who had accompanied the army "from Fort Lee to the edge of Pennsylvania," thus speaks in one of his writings published at the time: "With a handful of men we sustained an orderly retreat for near a hundred miles, brought off our ammunition, all our field-pieces, the greatest part of our stores, and had four rivers to pass. None can say that our retreat was precipitate, for we were three weeks in performing it, that the country might have time to come in. Twice we marched back to meet the enemy, and remained out until dark. The sign of fear was not seen in our camp; and had not some of the cowardly and disaffected inhabitants spread false alarms through the country, the Jerseys had never been ravaged."

And this is his testimony to the moral qualities of the commander-in-chief, as evinced in this time of perils and hardships: "Voltaire has remarked that King William never appeared to full advantage but in difficulties and in action. The same remark may be made of General Washington, for the character fits him. There is a natural firmness in some minds, which cannot be unlocked by trifles; but which, when unlocked, discovers a cabinet of fortitude; and I reckon it among those kinds of public blessings which we do not immediately see, that God hath blessed him with uninterrupted health, and given him a mind that can even flourish upon care." *

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* American Crisis, No. 1.

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

Washington clothed with Additional Powers—Recruitment of the Army—Increased Pay—Colonel John Cadwalader—Arrival of Sullivan—Gates—Wilkinson—A Coup de Main meditated—Posture of Affairs at Trenton—Gates declines to take a part—His Comments on Washington's Plans—Preparations for the Coup de Main—Crossing of the Delaware—Attack on the Enemy's Forces at Trenton—Death of Rahl—His Character

"BEFORE you receive this letter," writes Washington to his brother Augustine, "you will undoubtedly have heard of the captivity of General Lee. This is an additional misfortune; and the more vexatious, as it was by his own folly and imprudence, and without a view to effect any good, that he was taken. As he went to lodge three miles out of his own camp, and within twenty miles of the enemy, a rascally tory rode in the night to give notice of it to the enemy, who sent a party of light-horse that seized him and carried him off with every mark of triumph and indignity."

This is the severest comment that the magnanimous spirit of Washington permitted him to make on the conduct and fortunes of the man who would have supplanted him; and this is made in his private correspondence with his brother. No harsh strictures on them appear in his official letters to Congress or the Board of War; nothing but regret for his capture, as a loss to the service.

In the same letter he speaks of the critical state of affairs: "If every nerve is not strained to recruit the army with all possible expedition, I think the game is pretty nearly up. . . . You can form no idea of the perplexity of my situa-

tion. No man, I believe, ever had a greater choice of evils and less means to extricate himself from them. However, under a full persuasion of the justice of our cause, I cannot entertain an idea that it will finally sink; though it may remain for some time under a cloud."

Fortunately, Congress, prior to their adjournment, had resolved that, "until they should otherwise order, General Washington should be possessed of all power to order and direct all things relative to the department and to the operations of war." Thus empowered, he proceeded immediately to recruit three battalions of artillery. To those whose terms were expiring he promised an augmentation of twenty-five per cent upon their pay, and a bounty of ten dollars to the men for six weeks' service. "It was no time," he said, "to stand upon expense; nor in matters of self-evident exigency, to refer to Congress at the distance of a hundred and thirty or forty miles." "If any good officers will offer to raise men upon Continental pay and establishment in this quarter, I shall encourage them to do so, and regiment them when they have done it. It may be thought that I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty to adopt these measures, or to advise thus freely. A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessings of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse." *

The promise of increased pay and bounties had kept together for a time the dissolving army. The local militia began to turn out freely. Colonel John Cadwalader, a gentleman of gallant spirit, and cultivated mind and manners, brought a large volunteer detachment, well equipped, and composed principally of Philadelphia troops. Washington,

* Letter to the President of Congress.

who held Cadwalader in high esteem, assigned him an important station at Bristol, with Colonel Reed, who was his intimate friend, as an associate. They had it in charge to keep a watchful eye upon Count Donop's Hessians, who were cantoned along the opposite shore from Bordentown to the Black Horse.

On the 20th of December arrived General Sullivan in camp, with the troops recently commanded by the unlucky Lee. They were in a miserable plight; destitute of almost everything; many of them fit only for the hospital, and those whose terms were nearly out thinking of nothing but their discharge. About four hundred of them, who were Rhode Islanders, were sent down under Colonel Hitchcock to re enforce Cadwalader; who was now styled brigadier-general by courtesy, lest the Continental troops might object to act under his command.

On the same day arrived General Gates, with the remnants of four regiments from the Northern army. With him came Wilkinson, who now resumed his station as brigade-major in St. Clair's brigade, to which he belonged. To his Memoirs we are indebted for notices of the commander-in-chief. "When the divisions of Sullivan and Gates joined General Washington," writes Wilkinson, "he found his numbers increased, yet his difficulties were not sensibly diminished; ten days would disband his corps, and leave him fourteen hundred men, miserably provided in all things. I saw him in that gloomy period; dined with him, and attentively marked his aspect; always grave and thoughtful, he appeared at that time pensive and solemn in the extreme."

There were vivid schemes forming under that solemn aspect. The time seemed now propitious for the *coup de main* which Washington had of late been meditating.

Everything showed careless confidence on the part of the enemy. Howe was in winter quarters at New York. His troops were loosely cantoned about the Jerseys, from the Delaware to Brunswick, so that they could not readily be brought to act in concert on a sudden alarm. The Hessians were in the advance, stationed along the Delaware, facing the American lines, which were along the west bank. Cornwallis, thinking his work accomplished, had obtained leave of absence, and was likewise at New York, preparing to embark for England. Washington had now between five and six thousand men fit for service; with these he meditated to cross the river at night, at different points, and make simultaneous attacks upon the Hessian advance posts.

He calculated upon the eager support of his troops, who were burning to revenge the outrages on their homes and families committed by these foreign mercenaries. They considered the Hessians mere hirelings; slaves to a petty despot, fighting for sordid pay, and actuated by no sentiment of patriotism or honor. They had rendered themselves the horror of the Jerseys, by rapine, brutality, and heartlessness. At first, their military discipline had inspired awe, but of late they had become careless and unguarded, knowing the broken and dispirited state of the Americans, and considering them incapable of any offensive enterprise.

A brigade of three Hessian regiments, those of Rahl,* Lossberg, and Knyphausen, were stationed at Trenton. Colonel Rahl had the command of the post at his own solicitation, and in consequence of the laurels he had gained at

* Seldom has a name of so few letters been spelled so many ways as that of this commander. We find it written Rall in the military journals before us; yet we adhere to the one hitherto adopted by us, apparently on good authority.

White Plains and Fort Washington. We have before us journals of two Hessian lieutenants and a corporal, which give graphic particulars of the colonel and his post. According to their representations, he, with all his bravery, was little fitted for such an important command. He lacked the necessary vigilance and forecast.

One of the lieutenants speaks of him in a sarcastic vein, and evidently with some degree of prejudice. According to his account, there was more bustle than business at the post. The men were harassed with watches, detachments, and pickets, without purpose and without end. The cannon must be drawn forth every day from their proper places, and paraded about the town, seemingly only to make a stir and uproar.

The lieutenant was especially annoyed by the colonel's passion for music. Whether his men when off duty were well or ill clad, whether they kept their muskets clean and bright, and their ammunition in good order, was of little moment to the colonel, he never inquired about it; but the music! that was the thing! the hautboy—he never could have enough of them. The main guard was at no great distance from his quarters, and the music could not linger there long enough. There was a church close by, surrounded by palings; the officer on guard must march round and round it, with his men and musicians, looking, says the lieutenant, like a Catholic procession, wanting only the cross and the banner, and chanting choristers.

According to the same authority, Rahl was a boon companion; made merry until a late hour in the night, and then lay in bed until nine o'clock in the morning. When the officers came to parade between ten and eleven o'clock, and presented themselves at headquarters, he was often in his

bath, and the guard must be kept waiting half an hour longer. On parade, too, when any other commander would take occasion to talk with his staff officers and others upon duty about the concerns of the garrison, the colonel attended to nothing but the music—he was wrapped up in it, to the great disgust of the testy lieutenant.

And then, according to the latter, he took no precautions against the possibility of being attacked. A veteran officer, Major von Dechow, proposed that some works should be thrown up, where the cannon might be placed, ready against any assault. "Works!—pooh, pooh!"—the colonel made merry with the very idea—using an unseemly jest, which we forbear to quote. "An assault by the rebels! Let them come! We'll at them with the bayonet."

The veteran Dechow gravely persisted in his counsels. "Herr colonel," said he, respectfully, "it costs almost nothing; if it does not help, it does not harm." The pragmatical lieutenant, too, joined in the advice, and offered to undertake the work. The jovial colonel only repeated his joke, went away laughing at them both, and no works were thrown up.

The lieutenant, sorely nettled, observes sneeringly: "He believed the name of Rahl more fearful and redoubtable than all the works of Vauban and Cohorn, and that no rebel would dare to encounter it. A fit man truly to command a corps: and still more to defend a place lying so near an enemy having a hundred times his advantages. Everything with him was done heedlessly and without forecast." *

Such is the account given of this brave, but inconsiderate and light-hearted commander; given, however, by an officer

* Tagebuch eines Hessischen officiers.—MS.

not of his regiment. The honest corporal already mentioned, who was one of Rahl's own men, does him more justice. According to his journal, rumors that the Americans meditated an attack had aroused the vigilance of the colonel, and on the 21st of December he had reconnoitered the banks of the Delaware with a strong detachment, quite to Frankfort, to see if there were any movements of the Americans indicative of an intention to cross the river. He had returned without seeing any; but had since caused pickets and alarm posts to be stationed every night outside the town.*

Such was the posture of affairs at Trenton at the time the *coup de main* was meditated.

Whatever was to be done, however, must be done quickly, before the river was frozen. An intercepted letter had convinced Washington of what he had before suspected, that Howe was only waiting for that event to resume active operations, cross the river on the ice, and push on triumphantly to Philadelphia.

He communicated his project to Gates, and wished him to go to Bristol, take command there, and co-operate from that quarter. Gates, however, pleaded ill health, and requested leave to proceed to Philadelphia.

The request may have surprised Washington, considering the spirited enterprise that was on foot; but Gates, as has before been observed, had a disinclination to serve immediately under the commander-in-chief; like Lee, he had a disparaging opinion of him, or rather an impatience of his supremacy. He had, moreover, an ulterior object in view. Having been disappointed and chagrined in finding himself subordinate to General Schuyler in the Northern campaign,

* Tagebuch des corporals Johannes Reuber.—MS.

he was now intent on making interest among the members of Congress for an independent command. Washington urged that, on his way to Philadelphia, he would at least stop for a day or two at Bristol, to concert a plan of operations with Reed and Cadwalader, and adjust any little questions of etiquette and command that might arise between the Continental colonels who had gone thither with Lee's troops, and the volunteer officers stationed there.*

He does not appear to have complied even with this request. According to Wilkinson's account, he took quarters at Newtown, and set out thence for Baltimore on the 24th of December, the very day before that of the intended *coup de main*. He prevailed on Wilkinson to accompany him as far as Philadelphia. On the road he appeared to be much depressed in spirit; but he relieved himself, like Lee, by criticising the plans of the commander-in-chief. "He frequently," writes Wilkinson, "expressed the opinion that, while Washington was watching the enemy above Trenton, they would construct bateaux, pass the Delaware in his rear, and take possession of Philadelphia before he was aware; and that, instead of vainly attempting to stop Sir William Howe at the Delaware, General Washington ought to retire to the south of the Susquehanna, and there form an army. *He said it was his intention to propose this measure to Congress at Baltimore*, and urged me to accompany him to that place; but my duty forbade the thought."

Here we have somewhat of a counterpart to Lee's project of eclipsing the commander-in-chief. Evidently the two military veterans who had once been in conclave with him at Mount Vernon considered the truncheon of command falling from his grasp.

* Washington to Gates. Gates's Papers.

The projected attack upon the Hessian posts was to be threefold.

1st. Washington was to cross the Delaware with a considerable force, at McKonkey's Ferry (now Taylorsville), about nine miles above Trenton, and march down upon that place, where Rahl's cantonment comprised a brigade of fifteen hundred Hessians, a troop of British light-horse, and a number of chasseurs.

2d. General Ewing, with a body of Pennsylvania militia, was to cross at a ferry about a mile below Trenton; secure the bridge over the Assunpink Creek, a stream flowing along the south side of the town, and cut off any retreat of the enemy in that direction.

3d. General Putnam, with the troops occupied in fortifying Philadelphia, and those under General Cadwalader, was to cross below Burlington, and attack the lower posts under Count Donop. The several divisions were to cross the Delaware at night, so as to be ready for simultaneous action by five o'clock in the morning.

Seldom is a combined plan carried into full operation. Symptoms of an insurrection in Philadelphia obliged Putnam to remain with some force in that city; but he detached five or six hundred of the Pennsylvania militia under Colonel Griffin, his adjutant-general, who threw himself into the Jerseys, to be at hand to co-operate with Cadwalader.

A letter from Washington to Colonel Reed, who was stationed with Cadwalader, shows the anxiety of his mind, and his consciousness of the peril of the enterprise.

"Christmas day at night, one hour before day, is the time fixed upon for our attempt upon Trenton. For Heaven's sake keep this to yourself, as the discovery of it may prove fatal to us; our numbers, I am sorry to say, being less than

BATTLE OF TRENTON.

Irving, Vol. Thirteen, p. 315.

I had any conception of; yet nothing but necessity, dire necessity, will, nay must, justify an attack. Prepare, and, in concert with Griffin, attack as many of their posts as you possibly can, with a prospect of success; the more we can attack at the same instant, the more confusion we shall spread, and the greater good will result from it. . . . I have ordered our men to be provided with three days' provisions ready cooked, with which, and their blankets, they are to march; for if we are successful, which Heaven grant, and the circumstances favor, we may push on. I shall direct every ferry and ford to be well guarded, and not a soul suffered to pass without an officer's going down with the permit. Do the same with you."

It has been said that Christmas night was fixed upon for the enterprise because the Germans are prone to revel and carouse on that festival, and it was supposed a great part of the troops would be intoxicated and in a state of disorder and confusion; but in truth Washington would have chosen an earlier day had it been in his power. "We could not ripen matters for the attack before the time mentioned," said he in his letter to Reed, "so much out of sorts, and so much in want of everything, are the troops under Sullivan."

Early on the eventful evening (Dec. 25th), the troops destined for Washington's part of the attack, about two thousand four hundred strong, with a train of twenty small pieces, were paraded near McKonkey's Ferry, ready to pass as soon as it grew dark, in the hope of being all on the other side by twelve o'clock. Washington repaired to the ground accompanied by Generals Greene, Sullivan, Mercer, Stephen, and Lord Stirling. Greene was full of ardor for the enterprise; eager, no doubt, to wipe out the recollection of Fort Washington. It was, indeed, an anxious moment for all.

We have here some circumstances furnished us by the Memoirs of Wilkinson. That officer had returned from Philadelphia, and brought a letter from Gates to Washington. There was some snow on the ground, and he had traced the march of the troops for the last few miles by the blood from the feet of those whose shoes were broken. Being directed to Washington's quarters, he found him, he says, alone, with his whip in his hand, prepared to mount his horse. "When I presented the letter of General Gates to him, before receiving it, he exclaimed with solemnity: 'What a time is this to hand me letters!' I answered that I had been charged with it by General Gates. 'By General Gates! Where is he?' 'I left him this morning in Philadelphia.' 'What was he doing there?' 'I understood him that he was on his way to Congress.' He earnestly repeated, 'On his way to Congress!' then broke the seal, and I made my bow and joined General St. Clair on the bank of the river."

Did Washington surmise the incipient intrigues and cabals that were already aiming to undermine him? Had Gates's eagerness to push on to Congress, instead of remaining with the army in a moment of daring enterprise, suggested any doubts as to his object? Perhaps not. Washington's nature was too noble to be suspicious; and yet he had received sufficient cause to be distrustful.

Boats being in readiness, the troops began to cross about sunset. The weather was intensely cold; the wind was high, the current strong, and the river full of floating ice. Colonel Glover, with his amphibious regiment of Marblehead fishermen, was in advance; the same who had navigated the army across the Sound, in its retreat from Brooklyn on Long Island, to New York. They were men accustomed to battle

with the elements, yet with all their skill and experience the crossing was difficult and perilous. Washington, who had crossed with the troops, stood anxiously, yet patiently, on the eastern bank, while one precious hour after another elapsed, until the transportation of the artillery should be effected. The night was dark and tempestuous, the drifting ice drove the boats out of their course, and threatened them with destruction. Colonel Knox, who attended to the crossing of the artillery, assisted with his labors, but still more with his "stentorian lungs," giving orders and directions.

It was three o'clock before the artillery was landed, and nearly four before the troops took up their line of march. Trenton was nine miles distant; and not to be reached before daylight. To surprise it, therefore, was out of the question. There was no making a retreat without being discovered, and harassed in repassing the river. Besides, the troops from the other points might have crossed, and co-operation was essential to their safety. Washington resolved to push forward, and trust to Providence.

He formed the troops into two columns. The first he led himself, accompanied by Greene, Stirling, Mercer, and Stephen; it was to make a circuit by the upper or Pennington road, to the north of Trenton. The other, led by Sullivan, and including the brigade of St. Clair, was to take the lower river road, leading to the west end of the town. Sullivan's column was to halt a few moments at a cross-road leading to Howland's Ferry to give Washington's column time to effect its circuit, so that the attack might be simultaneous. On arriving at Trenton they were to force the outer guards, and push directly into the town before the enemy had time to form.

The Hessian journals before us enable us to give the

reader a glance into the opposite camp on this eventful night. The situation of Washington was more critical than he was aware. Notwithstanding the secrecy with which his plans had been conducted, Colonel Rahl had received a warning from General Grant, at Princeton, of the intended attack, and of the very time it was to be made, but stating that it was to be by a detachment under Lord Stirling. Rahl was accordingly on the alert.

It so happened that about dusk of this very evening, when Washington must have been preparing to cross the Delaware, there were alarm guns and firing at the Trenton outpost. The whole garrison was instantly drawn out under arms, and Colonel Rahl hastened to the outpost. It was found in confusion and six men wounded. A body of men had emerged from the woods, fired upon the picket, and immediately retired.*

Colonel Rahl, with two companies and a field-piece, marched through the woods, and made the rounds of the outposts, but seeing and hearing nothing, and finding all quiet, returned. Supposing this to be the attack against which he had been warned, and that it was "a mere flash in the pan," he relapsed into his feeling of security; and, as the night was cold and stormy, permitted the troops to return to their quarters and lay aside their arms. Thus the

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* Who it was that made this attack upon the outpost is not clearly ascertained. The Hessian lieutenant who commanded at the picket says it was a patrol sent out by Washington, under command of a captain, to reconnoiter, with strict orders not to engage, but if discovered to retire instantly as silently as possible. Colonel Reed, in a memorandum, says it was an advance party returning from the Jerseys to Pennsylvania.—See Life and Correspondence, vol. i., p. 277.

garrison and its unwary commander slept in fancied security at the very time that Washington and his troops were making their toilsome way across the Delaware. How perilous would have been their situation had their enemy been more vigilant!

It began to hail and snow as the troops commenced their march, and increased in violence as they advanced, the storm driving the sleet in their faces. So bitter was the cold that two of the men were frozen to death that night. The day dawned by the time Sullivan halted at the cross-road. It was discovered that the storm had rendered many of the muskets wet and useless. "What is to be done?" inquired Sullivan of St. Clair. "You have nothing for it than to push on and use the bayonet," was the reply. While some of the soldiers were endeavoring to clear their muskets, and squibbing off priming, Sullivan dispatched an officer to apprise the commander-in-chief of the condition of their arms. He came back half dismayed by an indignant burst of Washington, who ordered him to return instantly and tell General Sullivan to "advance and charge."

It was about eight o'clock when Washington's column arrived in the vicinity of the village. The storm, which had rendered the march intolerable, had kept every one within doors, and the snow had deadened the tread of the troops and the rumbling of the artillery. As they approached the village, Washington, who was in front, came to a man that was chopping wood by the roadside, and inquired, "Which way is the Hessian picket?" "I don't know," was the surly reply. "You may tell," said Captain Forest of the artillery, "for that is General Washington." The aspect of the man changed in an instant. Raising his hands to heaven, "God bless and prosper you!" cried he. "The

picket is in that house, and the sentry stands near that tree." *

The advance guard was led by a brave young officer, Captain William A. Washington, seconded by Lieutenant James Monroe (in after years President of the United States). They received orders to dislodge the picket. Here happened to be stationed the very lieutenant whose censures of the negligence of Colonel Rahl we have just quoted. By his own account, he was very near being entrapped in the guard-house. His sentries, he says, were not alert enough; and had he not stepped out of the picket-house himself, and discovered the enemy, they would have been upon him before his men could scramble to their arms. "Der feind! der feind! heraus! heraus! (the enemy! the enemy! turn out! turn out!)" was now the cry. He at first, he says, made a stand, thinking he had a mere marauding party to deal with; but, seeing heavy battalions at hand, gave way, and fell back upon a company stationed to support the picket, but which appears to have been no better prepared against surprise.

By this time the American artillery was unlimbered; Washington kept beside it, and the column proceeded. The report of firearms told that Sullivan was at the lower end of the town. Colonel Stark led his advanced guard, and did it in gallant style. The attacks, as concerted, were simultaneous. The outposts were driven in; they retreated, firing from behind houses. The Hessian drums beat to arms; the trumpets of the light-horse sounded the alarm; the whole place was in an uproar. Some of the enemy made a wild and undirected fire from the windows of their quarters; others rushed forward in disorder, and attempted to form

* Wilkinson's Memoirs, vol. i., p. 129.

in the main street, while dragoons hastily mounted, and galloping about, added to the confusion. Washington advanced with his column to the head of King Street; riding beside Captain Forest of the artillery. When Forest's battery of six guns was opened, the general kept on the left and advanced with it, giving directions to the fire. His position was an exposed one, and he was repeatedly entreated to fall back; but all such entreaties were useless, when once he became heated in action.

The enemy were training a couple of cannon in the main street to form a battery, which might have given the Americans a serious check; but Captain Washington and Lieutenant Monroe, with a part of the advanced guard, rushed forward, drove the artillerists from their guns, and took the two pieces when on the point of being fired. Both of these officers were wounded; the captain in the wrist, the lieutenant in the shoulder.

While Washington advanced on the north of the town, Sullivan approached on the west, and detached Stark to press on the lower or south end of the town. The British light-horse, and about five hundred Hessians and chasseurs, had been quartered in the lower part of the town. Seeing Washington's column pressing in front, and hearing Stark thundering in their rear, they took headlong flight by the bridge across the Assunpink, and so along the banks of the Delaware toward Count Donop's encampment at Bordentown. Had Washington's plan been carried into full effect, their retreat would have been cut off by General Ewing; but that officer had been prevented from crossing the river by the ice.

Colonel Rahl, according to the account of the lieutenant who had commanded the picket, completely lost his head in

the confusion of the surprise. The latter, when driven in by the American advance, found the colonel on horseback, endeavoring to rally his panic-stricken and disordered men, but himself sorely bewildered. He asked the lieutenant what was the force of the assailants. The latter answered that he had seen four or five battalions in the woods; three of them had fired upon him before he had retreated—"but," added he, "there are other troops to the right and left, and the town will soon be surrounded." The colonel rode in front of his troops—"Forward! march! advance! advance!" cried he. With some difficulty he succeeded in extricating his troops from the town, and leading them into an adjacent orchard. Now was the time, writes the lieutenant, for him to have pushed for another place, there to make a stand. At this critical moment he might have done so with credit, and without loss. The colonel seems to have had such an intention. A rapid retreat by the Princeton road was apparently in his thoughts; but he lacked decision. The idea of flying before the rebels was intolerable. Some one, too, exclaimed at the ruinous loss of leaving all their baggage to be plundered by the enemy. Changing his mind, he made a rash resolve. "All who are my grenadiers, forward!" cried he, and went back, writes his corporal, like a storm upon the town. "What madness was this!" writes the critical lieutenant. "A town that was of no use to us; that but ten or fifteen minutes before he had gladly left; that was now filled with three or four thousand enemies, stationed in houses or behind walls and hedges, and a battery of six cannon planted on the main street. And he to think of retaking it with his six or seven hundred men and their bayonets!"

Still he led his grenadiers bravely but rashly on, when,

in the midst of his career, he received a fatal wound from a musket-ball and fell from his horse. His men, left without their chief, were struck with dismay; heedless of the orders of the second in command, they retreated by the right up the banks of the Assunpink, intending to escape to Princeton. Washington saw their design, and threw Colonel Hand's corps of Pennsylvania riflemen in their way; while a body of Virginia troops gained their left. Brought to a stand, and perfectly bewildered, Washington thought they were forming in order of battle, and ordered a discharge of canister shot. "Sir, they have struck," exclaimed Forest. "Struck!" echoed the general. "Yes, sir, their colors are down." "So they are!" replied Washington, and spurred in that direction, followed by Forest and his whole command. The men grounded their arms and surrendered at discretion; "but had not Colonel Rahl been severely wounded," remarks his loyal corporal, "we would never have been taken alive!"

The skirmishing had now ceased in every direction. Major Wilkinson, who was with the lower column, was sent to the commander-in-chief for orders. He rode up, he says, at the moment that Colonel Rahl, supported by a file of sergeants, was presenting his sword. "On my approach," continues he, "the commander-in-chief took me by the hand, and observed, 'Major Wilkinson, this is a glorious day for our country!' his countenance beaming with complacency; while the unfortunate Rahl, who the day before would not have changed fortunes with him, now pale, bleeding, and covered with blood, in broken accents seemed to implore those attentions which the victor was well disposed to bestow on him."

He was, in fact, conveyed with great care to his quarters,

which were in the house of a kind and respectable Quaker family.

The number of prisoners taken in this affair was nearly one thousand, of which thirty-two were officers. The veteran Major von Dechow, who had urged in vain the throwing up of breastworks, received a mortal wound, of which he died in Trenton. Washington's triumph, however, was impaired by the failure of the two simultaneous attacks. General Ewing, who was to have crossed before day at Trenton Ferry, and taken possession of the bridge leading out of the town, over which the light-horse and Hessians retreated, was prevented by the quantity of ice in the river. Cadwalader was hindered by the same obstacle. He got part of his troops over, but found it impossible to embark his cannon, and was obliged, therefore, to return to the Pennsylvania side of the river. Had he and Ewing crossed, Donop's quarters would have been beaten up, and the fugitives from Trenton intercepted.

By the failure of this part of his plan, Washington had been exposed to the most imminent hazard. The force with which he had crossed, twenty-four hundred men, raw troops, was not enough to cope with the veteran garrison, had it been properly on its guard; and then there were the troops under Donop at hand to co-operate with it. Nothing saved him but the utter panic of the enemy; their want of proper alarm places, and their exaggerated idea of his forces: for one of the journals before us (the corporal's) states that he had with him fifteen thousand men, and another six thousand.* Even now that the place was in his possession he

* The lieutenant gives the latter number on the authority of Lord Stirling; but his lordship meant the whole number of men intended for the three several attacks. The force that actually crossed with Washington was what we have stated.

dared not linger in it. There was a superior force under Donop below him, and a strong battalion of infantry at Princeton. His own troops were exhausted by the operations of the night and morning in cold, rain, snow and storm. They had to guard about a thousand prisoners, taken in action, or found concealed in houses; there was little prospect of succor owing to the season and the state of the river. Washington gave up, therefore, all idea of immediately pursuing the enemy or keeping possession of Trenton, and determined to recross the Delaware with his prisoners and captured artillery. Understanding that the brave but unfortunate Rahl was in a dying state, he paid him a visit before leaving Trenton, accompanied by General Greene. They found him at his quarters in the house of a Quaker family. Their visit, and the respectful consideration and unaffected sympathy manifested by them, evidently soothed the feelings of the unfortunate soldier; now stripped of his late-won laurels, and resigned to die rather than outlive his honor.* We have given a somewhat sarcastic portrait of the colonel drawn by one of his lieutenants; another, Lieutenant Piel, paints with a soberer and more reliable pencil.

"For our whole ill luck," writes he, "we have to thank Colonel Rahl. It never occurred to him that the rebels might attack us; and, therefore, he had taken scarce any precautions against such an event. In truth I must confess we have universally thought too little of the rebels, who, until now, have never on any occasion been able to withstand us. Our brigadier (Rahl) was too proud to retire a step before such an enemy, although nothing remained for us but to retreat.

* Journal of Lieutenant Piel.

"General Howe had judged this man from a wrong point of view, or he would hardly have intrusted such an important post as Trenton to him. He was formed for a soldier, but not for a general. At the capture of Fort Washington he had gained much honor while under the command of a great general, but he lost all his renown at Trenton where he himself was general. He had courage to dare the hardiest enterprise; but he alone wanted the cool presence of mind necessary in a surprise like that at Trenton. His vivacity was too great; one thought crowded on another, so that he could come to no decision. Considered as a private man, he was deserving of high regard. He was generous, open-handed, hospitable; never cringing to his superiors, nor arrogant to his inferiors; but courteous to all. Even his domestics were treated more like friends than servants."

The loyal corporal, too, contributes his mite of praise to his dying commander. "In his last agony," writes the grateful soldier, "he yet thought of his grenadiers, and entreated General Washington that nothing might be taken from them but their arms. A promise was given," adds the corporal, "and was kept."

Even the satirical lieutenant half mourns over his memory. "He died," says he, "on the following evening, and lies buried in this place which he has rendered so famous, in the graveyard of the Presbyterian church. Sleep well! dear Commander! (theurer Feldherr). The Americans will hereafter set up a stone above thy grave with this inscription:

"Hier liegt der Oberst Rahl,
Mit ihm ist alles all!

(Here lies the Colonel Rahl,
With him all is over.)"

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

Treatment of the Hessian Prisoners—Their Interviews with Washington—Their Reception by the People

THE Hessian prisoners were conveyed across the Delaware by Johnson's Ferry into Pennsylvania; the private soldiers were marched off immediately to Newtown; the officers, twenty-three in number, remained in a small chamber in the Ferry House, where, according to their own account, they passed a dismal night; sore at heart that their recent triumphs at White Plains and Fort Washington should be so suddenly eclipsed.

On the following morning they were conducted to Newtown, under the escort of Colonel Weedon. His exterior, writes Lieutenant Piel, spoke but little in his favor, yet he won all our hearts by his kind and friendly conduct.

At Newtown the officers were quartered in inns and private houses, the soldiers in the church and jail. The officers paid a visit to Lord Stirling, whom some of them had known from his being captured at Long Island. He received them with great kindness. "Your general, Van Heister," said he, "treated me like a brother when I was a prisoner, and so, gentlemen, will you be treated by me."

"We had scarce seated ourselves," continues Lieutenant Piel, "when a long, meager, dark-looking man, whom we took for the parson of the place, stepped forth and held a discourse in German, in which he endeavored to set forth

the justice of the American side in this war. He told us he was a Hanoverian born; called the king of England nothing but the Elector of Hanover, and spoke of him so contemptuously that his garrulity became intolerable. We answered that we had not come to America to inquire which party was in the right; but to fight for the king.

"Lord Stirling, seeing how little we were edified by the preacher, relieved us from him by proposing to take us with him to visit General Washington. The latter received us very courteously, though we understood very little of what he said, as he spoke nothing but English, a language in which none of us at that time was strong. In his aspect shines forth nothing of the great man that he is universally considered. His eyes have scarce any fire. There is, however, a smiling expression on his countenance when he speaks that wins affection and respect. He invited four of our officers to dine with him; the rest dined with Lord Stirling." One of these officers who dined with the commander-in-chief was the satirical lieutenant whom we have so often quoted, and who was stationed at the picket on the morning of the attack. However disparagingly he may have thought of his unfortunate commander, he evidently had a very good opinion of himself. "General Washington," writes he in his journal, "did me the honor to converse a good deal with me concerning the unfortunate affair. I told him freely my opinion that our dispositions had been bad, otherwise we should not have fallen into his hands. He asked me if I could have made better dispositions, and in what manner? I told him yes; stated all the faults of our arrangements, and showed him how I would have done; and would have managed to come out of the affair with honor."

We have no doubt, from the specimens furnished in the

lieutenant's journal, that he went largely into his own merits and achievements, and the demerits and shortcomings of his luckless commander. Washington, he added, not only applauded his exposition of what he would have done, but made him a eulogy thereupon, and upon his watchfulness, and the defense he had made with his handful of men when his picket was attacked. Yet according to his own account, in his journal, with all his watchfulness, he came near being caught napping.

"General Washington," continues he, "is a courteous and polite man, but very cautious and reserved; talks little; and has a crafty (listige) physiognomy." We surmise the lieutenant had the most of the talk on that occasion, and the crafty or sly expression in Washington's physiognomy may have been a lurking but suppressed smile, provoked by the lieutenant's self-laudation and wordiness.

The Hessian prisoners were subsequently transferred from place to place, until they reached Winchester in the interior of Virginia. Wherever they arrived, people thronged from far and near to see these terrible beings, of whom they had received such formidable accounts; and were surprised and disappointed to find them looking like other men. At first they had to endure the hootings and revilings of the multitude, for having hired themselves out to the trade of blood; and they especially speak of the scoldings they received from old women in the villages, who upbraided them for coming to rob them of their liberty. "At length," writes the corporal in his journal, "General Washington had written notices put up in town and country, that we were innocent of this war, and had joined in it not of our free will, but through compulsion. We should, therefore, be treated not as enemies, but friends. From this time," adds he, "things

went better with us. Every day came many out of the towns, old and young, rich and poor, and brought us provisions, and treated us with kindness and humanity." *

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Episode—Colonel Griffin in the Jerseys—Donop decoyed—Inroad of Cadwalader and Reed—Retreat and Confusion of the Enemy's Outposts—Washington recrosses the Delaware with his Troops—The Game reversed—The Hessians hunted back through the Country—Washington made Military Dictator

THERE was a kind of episode in the affair at Trenton. Colonel Griffin, who had thrown himself previously into the Jerseys with his detachment of Pennsylvania militia, found himself, through indisposition and the scanty number of his troops, unable to render efficient service in the proposed attack. He sent word to Cadwalader, therefore, that he should probably render him more real aid by making a demonstration in front of Donop, and drawing him off so far into the interior as to be out of the way of rendering support to Colonel Rahl.

He accordingly presented himself in sight of Donop's cantonment on the 25th of December, and succeeded in drawing him out with nearly his whole force of two thousand men. He then retired slowly before him, skirmishing, but avoiding anything like an action, until he had lured him as far as Mount Holly; when he left him to find his way back to his post at his leisure.

The cannonade of Washington's attack in Trenton on the

* Tagebuch des corporals Johannes Reuber.—MS.

morning of the 26th was distinctly heard at Cadwalader's camp at Bristol. Imperfect tidings of the result reached there about eleven o'clock, and produced the highest exultation and excitement. Cadwalader made another attempt to cross the river and join Washington, whom he supposed to be still in the Jerseys, following up the blow he had struck. He could not effect the passage of the river with the most of his troops until midday of the 27th, when he received from Washington a detailed account of his success, and of his having recrossed into Pennsylvania.

Cadwalader was now in a dilemma. Donop, he presumed, was still at Mount Holly, whither Griffin had decoyed him; but he might soon march back. His forces were equal, if not superior in number to his own, and veterans, instead of raw militia. But then there was the glory of rivaling the exploit at Trenton, and the importance of following out the effort for the relief of the Jerseys and the salvation of Philadelphia. Besides, Washington, in all probability, after disposing of his prisoners, had again crossed into the Jerseys, and might be acting offensively.

Reed relieved Cadwalader from his dilemma by proposing that they should push on to Burlington, and there determine, according to intelligence, whether to proceed to Bordentown or Mount Holly. The plan was adopted. There was an alarm that the Hessian yagers lurked in a neighboring wood. Reed, accompanied by two officers, rode in advance to reconnoiter. He sent word to Cadwalader that it was a false alarm, and the latter took up his line of march.

Reed and his companions spurred on to reconnoiter the enemy's outposts, about four miles from Burlington, but pulled up at the place where the picket was usually stationed. There was no smoke, nor any sign of a human be-

ing. They rode up and found the place deserted. From the country people in the neighborhood they received an explanation. Count Donop had returned to his post from the pursuit of Griffin only in time to hear of the disaster at Trenton. He immediately began a retreat in the utmost panic and confusion, calling in his guards and parties as he hurried forward. The troops in the neighborhood of Burlington had decamped precipitately the preceding evening.

Colonel Reed sent back intelligence of this to Cadwalader, and still pushed on with his companions. As they rode along, they observed the inhabitants pulling down red rags which had been nailed to the doors: tory signs to insure good-will from the British. Arrived at Bordentown, not an enemy was to be seen; the fugitives from Trenton had spread a panic on the 26th, and the Hessians and their refugee adherents had fled in confusion, leaving their sick behind them. The broken and haggard looks of the inhabitants showed what they had suffered during the Hessian occupation. One of Reed's companions returned to Cadwalader, who had halted at Burlington, and advised him to proceed.

Cadwalader wrote in the night to Washington, informing him of his whereabout, and that he should march for Bordentown in the morning. "If you should think proper to cross over," added he, "it may easily be effected at the place where we passed; a pursuit would keep up the panic. They went off with great precipitation, and pressed all the wagons in their reach; I am told many of them are gone to South Amboy. If we can drive them from West Jersey, the success will raise an army next spring, and establish the credit of the Continental money to support it."

There was another letter from Cadwalader, dated on the following day, from Bordentown. He had eighteen hundred

men with him. Five hundred more were on their way to join him. General Mifflin, too, had sent over five hundred from Philadelphia and three hundred from Burlington, and was to follow with seven or eight hundred more.

Colonel Reed, too, wrote from Trenton on the 28th. He had found that place without a single soldier of either army, and in a still more wretched condition than Bordentown. He urged Washington to recross the river, and pursue the advantages already gained. Donop might be overtaken before he could reach Princeton or Brunswick, where the enemy were yet in force.*

Washington needed no prompting of the kind. Bent upon following up his blow, he had barely allowed his troops a day or two to recover from recent exposure and fatigue, that they might have strength and spirit to pursue the retreating enemy, beat up other of their quarters, and entirely reverse affairs in the Jerseys. In this spirit he had written to Generals McDougall and Maxwell at Morristown, to collect as large a body of militia as possible, and harass the enemy in flank and rear. Heath, also, had been ordered to abandon the Highlands, which there was no need of guarding at this season of the year, and hasten down with the Eastern militia as rapidly as possible, by the way of Hackensack, continuing on until he should send him further orders. "A fair opportunity is offered," said he, "of driving the enemy entirely from the Jerseys, or at least to the extremity of the province."

Men of influence also were dispatched by him into different parts of the Jerseys to spirit up the militia to revenge the oppression, the ravage, and insults they had experienced from

* Life and Correspondence of Pres. Reed, vol. i., p. 281.

the enemy, especially from the Hessians. "If what they have suffered," said he, "does not arouse their resentment, they must not possess the feelings of humanity."

On the 29th, his troops began to cross the river. It would be a slow and difficult operation, owing to the ice; two parties of light troops, therefore, were detached in advance, whom Colonel Reed was to send in pursuit of the enemy. They marched into Trenton about two o'clock, and were immediately put on the traces of Donop, to hang on his rear and harass him until other troops should come up. Cadwalader also detached a party of riflemen from Bordentown with like orders. Donop, in retreating, had divided his force, sending one part by a cross-road to Princeton, and hurrying on with the remainder to Brunswick. Notwithstanding the severity of the weather, and the wretchedness of the road, it was a service of animation and delight to the American troops to hunt back these Hessians through the country they had recently outraged, and over ground which they themselves had trodden so painfully and despondingly, in their retreat. In one instance, the riflemen surprised and captured a party of refugees who lingered in the rearguard, among whom were several newly-made officers. Never was there a more sudden reversal in the game of war than this retreat of the heavy German veterans, harassed by light parties of a raw militia, which they so lately had driven like chaff before them.

While this was going on, Washington was effecting the passage of his main force to Trenton. He himself had crossed on the 29th of December, but it took two days more to get the troops and artillery over the icy river, and that with great labor and difficulty. And now came a perplexity. With the year expired the term of several regiments,

which had seen most service and become inured to danger. Knowing how indispensable were such troops to lead on those which were raw and undisciplined, Washington had them paraded and invited to re-enlist. It was a difficult task to persuade them. They were haggard with fatigue, and hardship and privation of every kind; and their hearts yearned for home. By the persuasions of their officers, however, and a bounty of ten dollars, the greater proportion of those from the eastward were induced to remain six weeks longer.

Hard money was necessary in this emergency. How was it to be furnished? The military chest was incompetent. On the 30th, Washington wrote by express to Robert Morris, the patriotic financier at Philadelphia, whom he knew to be eager that the blow should be followed up. "If you could possibly collect a sum, if it were but one hundred, or one hundred and fifty pounds, it would be of service."

Morris received the letter in the evening. He was at his wits' end to raise the sum, for hard money was scarce. Fortunately, a wealthy Quaker, in this moment of exigency, supplied the "sinews of war," and early the next morning the money was forwarded by the express.

At this critical moment, too, Washington received a letter from a committee of Congress, transmitting him resolves of that body dated the 27th of December, investing him with military powers quite dictatorial. "Happy is it for this country," writes the committee, "that the general of their forces can safely be intrusted with the most unlimited power, and neither personal security, liberty, nor property be in the least degree endangered thereby." *

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* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1510.

Washington's acknowledgment of this great mark of confidence was noble and characteristic. "I find Congress have done me the honor to intrust me with powers, in my military capacity, of the highest nature and almost unlimited extent. Instead of thinking myself freed from all *civil* obligations by this mark of their confidence, I shall constantly bear in mind that, as the sword was the last resort for the preservation of our liberties, so it ought to be the first thing laid aside when those liberties are firmly established."

CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Howe hears of the Affair at Trenton—Cornwallis sent back to the Jerseys—Reconnoitering Expedition of Reed—His Exploits—Washington in Peril at Trenton—Re-enforced by Troops under Cadwalader and Mifflin—Position of his Men—Cornwallis at Trenton—Repulsed at the Assunpink—The American Camp menaced—Night March of Washington—Affair at Princeton—Death of Mercer—Rout of British Troops—Pursued by Washington—Cornwallis at Princeton—Baffled and Perplexed—Washington at Morristown—His System of Annoyance—The Tables turned upon the Enemy

General Howe was taking his ease in winter quarters in New York, waiting for the freezing of the Delaware to pursue his triumphant march to Philadelphia, when tidings were brought him of the surprise and capture of the Hessians at Trenton. "That three old established regiments of a people who made war their profession should lay down their arms to a ragged and undisciplined militia, and that with scarcely any loss on either side," was a matter of amazement. He instantly stopped Lord Cornwallis, who was on the point of embarking for England, and sent him back in all haste to resume the command in the Jerseys.

The ice in the Delaware impeded the crossing of the American troops, and gave the British time to draw in their scattered cantonments, and assemble their whole force at Princeton. While his troops were yet crossing, Washington sent out Colonel Reed to reconnoiter the position and movements of the enemy, and obtain information. Six of the Philadelphia light-horse, spirited young fellows, but who had never seen service, volunteered to accompany Reed. They patroled the country to the very vicinity of Princeton, but could collect no information from the inhabitants; who were harassed, terrified, and bewildered by the ravaging marches to and fro of friend and enemy.

Emerging from a wood almost within view of Princeton, they caught sight, from a rising ground, of two or three red coats passing from time to time from a barn to a dwelling-house. Here must be an outpost. Keeping the barn in a line with the house so as to cover their approach, they dashed up to the latter without being discovered, and surrounded it. Twelve British dragoons were within, who, though well armed, were so panicstricken that they surrendered without making defense. A commissary, also, was taken; the sergeant of the dragoons alone escaped. Colonel Reed and his six cavaliers returned in triumph to headquarters. Important information was obtained from their prisoners. Lord Cornwallis had joined General Grant the day before at Princeton with a re-enforcement of chosen troops. They had now seven or eight thousand men, and were pressing wagons for a march upon Trenton.*

Cadwalader, stationed at Crosswicks, about seven miles distant, between Bordentown and Trenton, sent intelligence

* Life of Reed, i. 282.

to the same purport, received by him from a young gentleman who had escaped from Princeton.

Word, too, was brought from other quarters that General Howe was on the march with a thousand light troops, with which he had landed at Amboy.

The situation of Washington was growing critical. The enemy were beginning to advance their large pickets toward Trenton. Everything indicated an approaching attack. The force with him was small; to retreat across the river would destroy the dawn of hope awakened in the bosoms of the Jersey militia by the late exploit; but to make a stand without re-enforcements was impossible. In this emergency, he called to his aid General Cadwalader from Crosswicks, and General Mifflin from Bordentown, with their collective forces, amounting to about three thousand six hundred men. He did it with reluctance, for it seemed like involving them in the common danger, but the exigency of the case admitted of no alternative. They promptly answered to his call, and, marching in the night, joined him on the 1st of January.

Washington chose a position for his main body on the east side of the Assunpink. There was a narrow stone bridge across it, where the water was very deep; the same bridge over which part of Rahl's brigade had escaped in the recent affair. He planted his artillery so as to command the bridge and the fords. His advance guard was stationed about three miles off in a wood, having in front a stream called Shabbakong Creek.

Early on the morning of the 2d came certain word that Cornwallis was approaching with all his force. Strong parties were sent out under General Greene, who skirmished with the enemy, and harassed them in their advance. By twelve o'clock they reached the Shabbakong, and halted for

a time on its northern bank. Then, crossing it, and moving forward with rapidity, they drove the advance guard out of the woods, and pushed on until they reached a high ground near the town. Here Hand's corps of several battalions was drawn up, and held them for a time in check. All the parties in advance ultimately retreated to the main body, on the east side of the Assunpink, and found some difficulty in crowding across the narrow bridge.

From all these checks and delays, it was nearly sunset before Cornwallis with the head of his army entered Trenton. His rearguard under General Leslie rested at Maiden Head, about six miles distant, and nearly half way between Trenton and Princeton. Forming his troops into columns, he now made repeated attempts to cross the Assunpink at the bridge and the fords; but was as often repulsed by the artillery. For a part of the time Washington, mounted on a white horse, stationed himself at the south end of the bridge, issuing his orders. Each time the enemy was repulsed there was a shout along the American lines. At length they drew off, came to a halt, and lighted their camp fires. The Americans did the same, using the neighboring fences for the purpose. Sir William Erskine, who was with Cornwallis, urged him, it is said, to attack Washington that evening in his camp; but his lordship declined; he felt sure of the game which had so often escaped him; he had at length, he thought, got Washington into a situation from which he could not escape, but where he might make a desperate stand; and he was willing to give his wearied troops a night's repose to prepare them for the closing struggle. He would be sure, he said, to "bag the fox in the morning."

A cannonade was kept up on both sides until dark; but with little damage to the Americans. When night closed

in, the two camps lay in sight of each other's fires, ruminating the bloody action of the following day. It was the most gloomy and anxious night that had yet closed in on the American army throughout its series of perils and disasters; for there was no concealing the impending danger. But what must have been the feelings of the commander-in-chief, as he anxiously patroled his camp, and considered his desperate position? A small stream, fordable in several places, was all that separated his raw, inexperienced army from an enemy vastly superior in numbers and discipline, and stung to action by the mortification of a late defeat. A general action with them must be ruinous; but how was he to retreat? Behind him was the Delaware, impassable from floating ice. Granting even (a thing not to be hoped) that a retreat across it could be effected, the consequences would be equally fatal. The Jerseys would be left in possession of the enemy, endangering the immediate capture of Philadelphia, and sinking the public mind into despondency.

In this darkest of moments a gleam of hope flashed upon his mind: a bold expedient suggested itself. Almost the whole of the enemy's forces must by this time be drawn out of Princeton and advancing by detachments toward Trenton, while their baggage and principal stores must remain weakly guarded at Brunswick. Was it not possible, by a rapid night-march along the Quaker road, a different road from that on which General Leslie with the rearguard was resting, to get past that force undiscovered, come by surprise upon those left at Princeton, capture or destroy what stores were left there, and then push on to Brunswick? This would save the army from being cut off; would avoid the appearance of a defeat; and might draw the enemy away from Trenton, while some fortunate stroke might give additional

reputation to the American arms. Even should the enemy march on to Philadelphia, it could not in any case be prevented; while a counter blow in the Jerseys would be of great consolation.

Such was the plan which Washington revolved in his mind on the gloomy banks of the Assunpink, and which he laid before his officers in a council of war, held after nightfall, at the quarters of General Mercer. It met with instant concurrence, being of that hardy, adventurous kind which seems congenial with the American character. One formidable difficulty presented itself. The weather was unusually mild; there was a thaw, by which the roads might be rendered deep and miry, and almost impassable. Fortunately, or rather providentially, as Washington was prone to consider it, the wind veered to the north in the course of the evening; the weather became intensely cold, and in two hours the roads were once more hard and frost-bound. In the meantime the baggage of the army was silently removed to Burlington, and every other preparation was made for a rapid march. To deceive the enemy, men were employed to dig trenches near the bridge within hearing of the British sentries, with orders to continue noisily at work until daybreak; others were to go the rounds; relieve guards at the bridge and fords; keep up the camp fires, and maintain all the appearance of a regular encampment. At daybreak they were to hasten after the army.

In the dead of the night the army drew quietly out of the encampment and began its march. General Mercer, mounted on a favorite gray horse, was in the advance with the remnant of his flying camp, now but about three hundred and fifty men, principally relics of the brave Delaware and Maryland regiments, with some of the Pennsylvania

militia. Among the latter were youths belonging to the best families of Philadelphia. The main body followed, under Washington's immediate command.

The Quaker road was a complete roundabout, joining the main road about two miles from Princeton, where Washington expected to arrive before daybreak. The road, however, was new and rugged; cut through woods where the stumps of trees broke the wheels of some of the baggage trains, and retarded the march of the troops; so that it was near sunrise of a bright, frosty morning when Washington reached the bridge over Stony Brook, about three miles from Princeton. After crossing the bridge, he led his troops along the bank of the brook to the edge of a wood, where a by-road led off on the right through low grounds, and was said by the guides to be a short cut to Princeton, and less exposed to view. By this road Washington defiled with the main body, ordering Mercer to continue along the brook with his brigade, until he should arrive at the main road, where he was to secure, and, if possible, destroy a bridge over which it passes; so as to intercept any fugitives from Princeton, and check any retrograde movements of the British troops which might have advanced toward Trenton.

Hitherto the movements of the Americans had been undiscovered by the enemy. Three regiments of the latter, the 17th, 40th, and 55th, with three troops of dragoons, had been quartered all night in Princeton, under marching orders to join Lord Cornwallis in the morning. The 17th regiment, under Colonel Mawhood, was already on the march; the 55th regiment was preparing to follow. Mawhood had crossed the bridge by which the old or main road to Trenton passes over Stony Brook, and was proceeding through a wood beyond, when, as he attained the summit of a hill

about sunrise, the glittering of arms betrayed to him the movement of Mercer's troops to the left, who were filing along the Quaker road to secure the bridge, as they had been ordered.

The woods prevented him from seeing their number. He supposed them to be some broken portion of the American army flying before Lord Cornwallis. With this idea, he faced about, and made a retrograde movement, to intercept them or hold them in check; while messengers spurred off in all speed to hasten forward the regiments still lingering at Princeton, so as completely to surround them.

The woods concealed him until he had recrossed the bridge of Stony Brook, when he came in full sight of the van of Mercer's brigade. Both parties pushed to get possession of a rising ground on the right near the house of a Mr. Clark, of the peaceful Society of Friends. The Americans being nearest, reached it first, and formed behind a hedge fence which extended along a slope in front of the house; whence, being chiefly armed with rifles, they opened a destructive fire. It was returned with great spirit by the enemy. At the first discharge Mercer was dismounted, "his gallant gray," being crippled by a musket-ball in the leg. One of his colonels, also, was mortally wounded, and carried to the rear. Availing themselves of the confusion thus occasioned, the British charged with the bayonet; the American riflemen having no weapon of the kind were thrown into disorder and retreated. Mercer, who was on foot, endeavored to rally them, when a blow from the butt-end of a musket felled him to the ground. He rose and defended himself with his sword, but was surrounded, bayoneted repeatedly, and left for dead.

Mawhood pursued the broken and retreating troops to

the brow of the rising ground, on which Clark's house was situated, when he beheld a large force emerging from a wood and advancing to the rescue. It was a body of Pennsylvania militia, which Washington, on hearing the firing, had detached to the support of Mercer. Mawhood instantly ceased pursuit, drew up his artillery, and by a heavy discharge brought the militia to a stand. At this moment Washington himself arrived at the scene of action, having galloped from the by-road in advance of his troops. From a rising ground he beheld Mercer's troops retreating in confusion, and the detachment of militia checked by Mawhood's artillery. Everything was at peril. Putting spurs to his horse, he dashed past the hesitating militia, waving his hat and cheering them on. His commanding figure and white horse made him a conspicuous object for the enemy's marksmen; but he heeded it not. Galloping forward under the fire of Mawhood's battery, he called upon Mercer's broken brigade. The Pennsylvanians rallied at the sound of his voice and caught fire from his example. At the same time the 7th Virginia regiment emerged from the wood, and moved forward with loud cheers, while a fire of grapeshot was opened by Captain Moulder of the American artillery from the brow of a ridge to the south.

Colonel Mawhood, who a moment before had thought his triumph secure, found himself assailed on every side, and separated from the other British regiments. He fought, however, with great bravery, and for a time the action was desperate. Washington was in the midst of it; equally endangered by the random fire of his own men and the artillery and musketry of the enemy. His aid-de-camp, Colonel Fitzgerald, a young and ardent Irishman, losing sight of him in the heat of the fight when enveloped in dust and

smoke, dropped the bridle on the neck of his horse and drew his hat over his eyes; giving him up for lost. When he saw him, however, emerge from the cloud, waving his hat, and beheld the enemy giving way, he spurred up to his side. "Thank God," cried he, "your Excellency is safe!" "Away, my dear colonel, and bring up the troops," was the reply; "the day is our own!" It was one of those occasions in which the latent fire of Washington's character blazed forth.

Mawhood, by this time, had forced his way, at the point of the bayonet, through gathering foes, though with heavy loss, back to the main road, and was in full retreat toward Trenton to join Cornwallis. Washington detached Major Kelly with a party of Pennsylvania troops to destroy the bridge at Stony Brook, over which Mawhood had retreated, so as to impede the advance of General Leslie from Maiden Head.

In the meantime the 55th regiment, which had been on the left and nearer Princeton, had been encountered by the American advance guard under General St. Clair, and after some sharp fighting in a ravine had given way, and was retreating across fields and along a by-road to Brunswick. The remaining regiment, the 40th, had not been able to come up in time for the action; a part of it fled toward Brunswick; the residue took refuge in the college at Princeton, recently occupied by them as barracks. Artillery was now brought to bear on the college, and a few shot compelled those within to surrender.

In this brief but brilliant action about one hundred of the British were left dead on the field, and nearly three hundred taken prisoners, fourteen of whom were officers. Among the slain was Captain Leslie, son of the Earl of Leven. His death was greatly lamented by his captured companions.

The loss of the Americans was about twenty-five or thirty men, and several officers. Among the latter was Colonel Haslet, who had distinguished himself throughout the campaign by being among the foremost in services of danger. He was indeed a gallant officer, and gallantly seconded by his Delaware troops.

A greater loss was that of General Mercer. He was said to be either dead or dying in the house of Mr. Clark, whither he had been conveyed by his aid-de-camp, Major Armstrong, who found him, after the retreat of Mawhood's troops, lying on the field gashed with several wounds, and insensible from cold and loss of blood. Washington would have ridden back from Princeton to visit him, and have him conveyed to a place of greater security; but was assured that, if alive, he was too desperately wounded to bear removal; in the meantime he was in good hands, being faithfully attended to by his aid-de-camp, Major Armstrong, and treated with the utmost care and kindness by Mr. Clark's family.*

Under these circumstances, Washington felt compelled to leave his old companion in arms to his fate. Indeed, he was called away by the exigencies of his command, having to pursue the routed regiments, which were making a headlong retreat to Brunswick. In this pursuit he took the lead at the head of a detachment of cavalry. At Kingston, however, three miles to the northeast of Princeton, he pulled up, restrained his ardor, and held a council of war on horseback. Should he keep on to Brunswick or not? The capture of the British stores and baggage would make his triumph complete; but, on the other hand, his troops were excessively fatigued by their rapid march all night and hard fight

* See Washington to Col. Reed, Jan. 15.

in the morning. All of them had been one night without sleep, and some of them two, and many were half-starved. They were without blankets, thinly clad, some of them barefooted, and this in freezing weather. Cornwallis would be upon them before they could reach Brunswick. His rear-guard, under General Leslie, had been quartered but six miles from Princeton, and the retreating troops must have roused them. Under these considerations, it was determined to discontinue the pursuit, and push for Morristown. There they would be in a mountainous country, heavily wooded, in an abundant neighborhood, and on the flank of the enemy, with various defiles by which they might change their position according to his movements.

Filing off to the left, therefore, from Kingston, and breaking down the bridges behind him, Washington took the narrow road by Rocky Hill to Pluckamin. His troops were so exhausted that many in the course of the march would lie down in the woods on the frozen ground and fall asleep, and were with difficulty roused and cheered forward. At Pluckamin he halted for a time, to allow them a little repose and refreshment. While they are taking breath, we will cast our eyes back to the camp of Cornwallis, to see what was the effect upon him of this masterly movement of Washington.

His lordship had retired to rest at Trenton with his sportsman's vaunt that he would "bag the fox in the morning." Nothing could surpass his surprise and chagrin when at daybreak the expiring watchfires and deserted camp of the Americans told him that the prize had once more evaded his grasp; that the general whose military skill he had decried had outgeneraled him.

For a time he could not learn whither the army, which

had stolen away so silently, had directed its stealthy march. By sunrise, however, there was the booming of cannon, like the rumbling of distant thunder, in the direction of Princeton. The idea flashed upon him that Washington had not merely escaped, but was about to make a dash at the British magazines at Brunswick. Alarmed for the safety of his military stores, his lordship forthwith broke up his camp and made a rapid march toward Princeton. As he arrived in sight of the bridge over Stony Brook he beheld Major Kelly and his party busy in its destruction. A distant discharge of round shot from his field-pieces drove them away, but the bridge was already broken. It would take time to repair it for the passage of the artillery; so Cornwallis in his impatience urged his troops breast-high through the turbulent and icy stream, and again pushed forward. He was brought to a stand by the discharge of a thirty-two pounder from a distant breastwork. Supposing the Americans to be there in force, and prepared to make resistance, he sent out some horsemen to reconnoiter, and advanced to storm the battery. There was no one there. The thirty-two pounder had been left behind by the Americans as too unwieldy, and a match had been applied to it by some lingerer of Washington's rear-guard.

Without further delay Cornwallis hurried forward, eager to save his magazines. Crossing the bridge at Kingston, he kept on along the Brunswick road, supposing Washington still before him. The latter had got far in the advance during the delays caused by the broken bridge at Stony Brook, and the discharge of the thirty-two pounder; and the alteration of his course at Kingston had carried him completely out of the way of Cornwallis. His lordship reached Brunswick toward evening, and endeavored to console himself, by

the safety of the military stores, for being so completely foiled and out-maneuvered.

Washington, in the meantime, was all on the alert; the lion part of his nature was aroused; and while his weary troops were in a manner panting upon the ground around him he was dispatching missives, and calling out aid to enable him to follow up his successes. In a letter to Putnam, written from Pluckamin during the halt, he says: "The enemy appear to be panic-struck. I am in hopes of driving them out of the Jerseys. March the troops under your command to Crosswicks, and keep a strict watch upon the enemy in this quarter. Keep as many spies out as you think proper. A number of horsemen in the dress of the country must be kept constantly going backward and forward for this purpose. If you discover any motion of the enemy of consequence, let me be informed thereof as soon as possible by express."

To General Heath, also, who was stationed in the Highlands of the Hudson, he wrote at the same hurried moment. "The enemy are in great consternation; and as the panic affords us a favorable opportunity to drive them out of the Jerseys, it has been determined in council that you should move down toward New York with a considerable force, as if you had a design upon the city. That being an object of great importance, the enemy will be reduced to the necessity of withdrawing a considerable part of their force from the Jerseys, if not the whole, to secure the city."

These letters dispatched, he continued forward to Morristown, where at length he came to a halt from his incessant and harassing marchings. There he learned that General Mercer was still alive. He immediately sent his own nephew, Major George Lewis, under the protection of a flag, to

attend upon him. Mercer had indeed been kindly nursed by a daughter of Mr. Clark and a negro woman, who had not been frightened from their home by the storm of battle which raged round it. At the time that the troops of Cornwallis approached, Major Armstrong was binding up Mercer's wounds. The latter insisted on his leaving him in the kind hands of Mr. Clark's household, and rejoining the army. Lewis found him languishing in great pain; he had been treated with respect by the enemy, and great tenderness by the benevolent family who had sheltered him. He expired in the arms of Major Lewis on the 12th of January, in the fifty-sixth year of his age. Dr. Benjamin Rush, afterward celebrated as a physician, was with him when he died.

He was upright, intelligent, and brave; esteemed as a soldier and beloved as a man, and by none more so than by Washington. His career as a general had been brief; but long enough to secure him a lasting renown. His name remains one of the consecrated names of the Revolution.

From Morristown, Washington again wrote to General Heath, repeating his former orders. To Major-general Lincoln, also, who was just arrived at Peekskill, and had command of the Massachusetts militia, he writes on the 7th: "General Heath will communicate mine of this date to you, by which you will find that the greater part of your troops are to move down toward New York, to draw the attention of the enemy to that quarter; and if they do not throw a considerable body back again, you may, in all probability, carry the city, or at least blockade them in it. . . . Be as expeditious as possible in moving forward, for the sooner a panic-struck enemy is followed the better. If we can oblige them to evacuate the Jerseys, we must drive them to the

utmost distress; for they have depended upon the supplies from that State for their winter's support."

Colonel Reed was ordered to send out rangers and bodies of militia to scour the country, waylay foraging parties, cut off supplies, and keep the cantonments of the enemy in a state of siege. "I would not suffer a man to stir beyond their lines," writes Washington, "nor suffer them to have the least communication with the country."

The expedition under General Heath toward New York, from which much had been anticipated by Washington, proved a failure. It moved in three divisions, by different routes, but all arriving nearly at the same time at the enemy's outposts at King's Bridge. There was some skirmishing, but the great feature of the expedition was a pompous and peremptory summons of Fort Independence to surrender. "Twenty minutes only can be allowed," said Heath, "for the garrison to give their answer, and, should it be in the negative, they must abide the consequences." The garrison made no answer but an occasional cannonade. Heath failed to follow up his summons by corresponding deeds. He hovered and skirmished for some days about the outposts and Spyt den Duivel Creek, and then retired before a threatened snowstorm and the report of an enemy's fleet from Rhode Island, with troops under Lord Percy, who might land in Westchester and take the besieging force in rear.

Washington, while he spoke of Heath's failure with indulgence in his dispatches to government, could not but give him a rebuke in a private letter. "Your summons," writes he, "as you did not attempt to fulfill your threats, was not only idle, but farcical; and will not fail of turning the laugh exceedingly upon us. These things I mention to you as a

friend, for you will perceive they have composed no part of my public letter."

But though disappointed in this part of his plan, Washington, having received re-enforcements of militia, continued, with his scanty army, to carry on his system of annoyance. The situation of Cornwallis, who, but a short time before, traversed the Jerseys so triumphantly, became daily more and more irksome. Spies were in his camp, to give notice of every movement, and foes without to take advantage of it; so that not a foraging party could sally forth without being waylaid. By degrees he drew in his troops which were posted about the country, and collected them at New Brunswick and Amboy, so as to have a communication by water with New York, whence he was now compelled to draw nearly all his supplies; "presenting," to use the words of Hamilton, "the extraordinary spectacle of a powerful army straitened within narrow limits by the phantom of a military force, and never permitted to transgress those limits with impunity."

In fact, the recent operations in the Jerseys had suddenly changed the whole aspect of the war, and given a triumphant close to what had been a disastrous campaign.

The troops, which for months had been driven from post to post, apparently an undisciplined rabble, had all at once turned upon their pursuers, and astounded them by brilliant stratagems and daring exploits. The commander, whose cautious policy had been sneered at by enemies and regarded with impatience by misjudging friends, had all at once shown that he possessed enterprise as well as circumspection, energy as well as endurance, and that beneath his wary coldness lurked a fire to break forth at the proper moment. This year's campaign, the most critical one of the war, and

especially the part of it which occurred in the Jerseys, was the ordeal that made his great qualities fully appreciated by his countrymen, and gained for him from the statesmen and generals of Europe the appellation of the AMERICAN FABIUS.

PART THIRD

CHAPTER ONE

Burke on the State of Affairs in America—New Jersey Roused to Arms—Washington grants Safe Conduct to Hessian Convoys—Encampment at Morristown—Putnam at Princeton—His Stratagem to Conceal the Weakness of his Camp—Exploit of General Dickinson near Somerset Court-House—Washington's Counter Proclamation—Prevalence of the Smallpox—Inoculation of the Army—Contrast of the British and American Commanders and their Camps

THE news of Washington's recrossing the Delaware and of his subsequent achievements in the Jerseys had not reached London on the 9th of January. "The affairs of America seem to be drawing to a crisis," writes Edmund Burke. "The Howes are at this time in possession of, or able to awe, the whole middle coast of America, from Delaware to the western boundary of Massachusetts Bay; the naval barrier on the side of Canada is broken. A great tract is open for the supply of the troops; the River Hudson opens a way into the heart of the provinces, and nothing can, in all probability, prevent an early and offensive campaign. What the Americans have done is, in their circumstances, truly astonishing; it is indeed infinitely more than I expected from them. But, having done so much for some short time, I

began to entertain an opinion that they might do more. It is now, however, evident that they cannot look standing armies in the face. They are inferior in everything—even in numbers. There seem by the best accounts not to be above ten or twelve thousand men at most in their grand army. The rest are militia, and not wonderfully well composed or disciplined. They decline a general engagement; prudently enough, if their object had been to make the war attend upon a treaty of good terms of subjection; but when they look further, this will not do. An army that is obliged at all times, and in all situations, to decline an engagement, may delay their ruin, but can never defend their country." *

At the time when this was written the Howes had learned, to their mortification, that "the mere running through a province is not subduing it." The British commanders had been outgeneraled, attacked, and defeated. They had nearly been driven out of the Jerseys, and were now hemmed in and held in check by Washington and his handful of men castled among the heights of Morristown. So far from holding possession of the territory they had so recently overrun, they were fain to ask safe conduct across it for a convoy to their soldiers captured in battle. It must have been a severe trial to the pride of Cornwallis when he had to inquire by letter of Washington whether money and stores could be sent to the Hessians captured at Trenton, and a surgeon and medicines to the wounded at Princeton; and Washington's reply must have conveyed a reproof still more mortifying: No molestation, he assured his lordship, would be offered to the convoy by any part of the regular army under his command; but "*he could not answer for the militia, who were resort-*

* Burke's Works, vol. v., p. 125.

ing to arms in most parts of the State, and were excessively exasperated at the treatment they had met with from both Hessian and British troops."

In fact, the conduct of the enemy had roused the whole country against them. The proclamations and printed protections of the British commanders, on the faith of which the inhabitants in general had stayed at home, and forebore to take up arms, had proved of no avail. The Hessians could not or would not understand them, but plundered friend and foe alike.* The British soldiery often followed their example, and the plunderings of both were at times attended by those brutal outrages on the weaker sex which inflame the dullest spirits to revenge. The whole State was thus roused against its invaders. In Washington's retreat of more than a hundred miles through the Jerseys, he had never been joined by more than one hundred of its inhabitants; now sufferers of both parties rose as one man to avenge their personal injuries. The late quiet yeomanry armed themselves, and scoured the country in small parties to seize on stragglers, and the militia began to signalize themselves in voluntary skirmishes with regular troops.

In effect, Washington ordered a safe conduct to be given to the Hessian baggage as far as Philadelphia, and to the surgeon and medicines to Princeton, and permitted a Hessian sergeant and twelve men, unarmed, to attend the baggage until it was delivered to their countrymen.

Morristown, where the main army was encamped, had

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* "These rascals plunder all indiscriminately. If they see anything they like, they say, 'Rebel good for Hesseman's,' and seize upon it for their own use. They have no idea of the distinctions between Whig and Tory."—Letter of Hazard the Postmaster.

not been chosen by Washington as a permanent post, but merely as a halting-place, where his troops might repose after their excessive fatigues and their sufferings from the inclement season. Further considerations persuaded him that it was well situated for the system of petty warfare which he meditated, and induced him to remain there. It was protected by forests and rugged heights. All approach from the seaboard was rendered difficult and dangerous to a hostile force by a chain of sharp hills, extending from Pluckamin, by Boundbrook and Springfield, to the vicinity of the Passaic River, while various defiles in the rear afforded safer retreats into a fertile and well-peopled region.* It was nearly equidistant from Amboy, Newark, and Brunswick, the principal posts of the enemy; so that any movement made from them could be met by a counter movement on his part; while the forays and skirmishes by which he might harass them would school and season his own troops. He had three faithful generals with him: Greene, his reliance on all occasions; swarthy Sullivan, whose excitable temper and quick sensibilities he had sometimes to keep in check by friendly counsels and rebukes, but who was a good officer, and loyally attached to him; and brave, genial, generous Knox, never so happy as when by his side. He had lately been advanced to the rank of brigadier at his recommendation, and commanded the artillery.

Washington's military family at this time was composed of his aides-de-camp, Colonels Meade and Tench Tilghman, of Philadelphia; gentlemen of gallant spirit, amiable tempers, and cultivated manners; and his secretary, Colonel Robert H. Harrison, of Maryland; the "old secretary," as

* Wilkinson's Memoirs, vol. i., p. 149.

he was familiarly called among his associates, and by whom he was described as "one in whom every man had confidence, and by whom no man was deceived."

Washington's headquarters at first were in what was called the Freemason's Tavern, on the north side of the village green. His troops were encamped about the vicinity of the village, at first in tents, until they could build log huts for shelter against the winter's cold. The main encampment was near Bottle Hill, in a sheltered valley, which was thickly wooded, and had abundant springs. It extended southeasterly from Morristown; and was called the Lowantica Valley, from the Indian name of a beautiful limpid brook which ran through it, and lost itself in a great swamp.*

The enemy being now concentrated at New Brunswick and Amboy, General Putnam was ordered by Washington to move from Crosswicks to Princeton, with the troops under his command. He was instructed to draw his forage as much as possible from the neighborhood of Brunswick, about eighteen miles off, thereby contributing to distress the enemy; to have good scouting parties continually on the lookout, to keep nothing with him but what could be moved off at a moment's warning, and, if compelled to leave Princeton, to retreat toward the mountains, so as to form a junction with the forces at Morristown.

Putnam had with him but a few hundred men. "You will give out your strength to be twice as great as it is," writes Washington; a common expedient with him in those times of scanty means. Putnam acted up to the advice. A British officer, Captain Macpherson, was lying desperately wounded at Princeton, and Putnam, in the kindness of his

* Notes of the Rev. Joseph F. Tuttle.—MS.

heart, was induced to send in a flag to Brunswick in quest of a friend and military comrade of the dying man, to attend him in his last moments and make his will. To prevent the weakness of the garrison from being discovered, the visitor was brought in after dark. Lights gleamed in all the college windows, and in the vacant houses about the town; the handful of troops capable of duty were marched hither and thither, and backward and forward, and paraded about to such effect that the visitor, on his return to the British camp, reported the force under the old general to be at least five thousand strong.*

Cantonments were gradually formed between Princeton and the Highlands of the Hudson, which made the left flank of Washington's position, and where General Heath had command. General Philemon Dickinson, who commanded the New Jersey militia, was stationed on the west side of Millstone River, near Somerset court-house, one of the nearest posts to the enemy's camp at Brunswick. A British foraging party, of five or six hundred strong, sent out by Cornwallis with forty wagons and upward of one hundred draught horses, mostly of the English breed, having collected sheep and cattle about the country, were sacking a mill on the opposite side of the river, where a large quantity of flour was deposited. While thus employed, Dickinson set upon them with a force equal in number, but composed of raw militia and fifty Philadelphia riflemen. He dashed through the river, waist deep, with his men, and charged the enemy so suddenly and vigorously, that, though supported by three field-pieces, they gave way, left their convoy, and retreated so precipitately that he made only nine prisoners.

* Sparks' Am. Biography, vol. vii., p. 196.

A number of killed and wounded were carried off by the fugitives on light wagons.*

These exploits of the militia were noticed with high encomiums by Washington, while, at the same time, he was rigid in prohibiting and punishing the excesses into which men are apt to run when suddenly clothed with military power. Such is the spirit of a general order issued at this time. "The general prohibits, in both the militia and Continental troops, the infamous practice of plundering the inhabitants under the specious pretense of their being tories. . . . It is our business to give protection and support to the poor distressed inhabitants, not to multiply and increase their calamities." After the publication of this order, all excesses of this kind were to be punished in the severest manner.

To counteract the proclamation of the British commissioners, promising amnesty to all in rebellion, who should, in a given time, return to their allegiance, Washington now issued a counter proclamation (Jan. 25), commanding every person who had subscribed a declaration of fidelity to Great Britain, or taken an oath of allegiance, to repair within thirty days to headquarters, or the quarters of the nearest general officer of the Continental army or of the militia, and there take the oath of allegiance to the United States of America, and give up any protection, certificate, or passport he might have received from the enemy; at the same time granting full liberty to all such as preferred the interest and protection of Great Britain to the freedom and happiness of their country, forthwith to withdraw themselves and families within the enemy's

* Washington to the President of Congress. Also note to Sparks, vol. iv., p. 290.

lines. All who should neglect or refuse to comply with this order were to be considered adherents to the crown, and treated as common enemies.

This measure met with objections at the time, some of the timid or overcautious thinking it inexpedient; others, jealous of the extraordinary powers vested in Washington, questioning whether he had not transcended these powers, and exercised a despotism.

The smallpox, which had been fatally prevalent in the preceding year, had again broken out, and Washington feared it might spread through the whole army. He took advantage of the interval of comparative quiet to have his troops inoculated. Houses were set apart in various places as hospitals for inoculation, and a church was appropriated for the use of those who had taken the malady in the natural way. Among these the ravages were frightful. The traditions of the place and neighborhood give lamentable pictures of distress caused by this loathsome disease in the camp and in the villages, wherever it had not been parried by inoculation.

"Washington," we are told, "was not an unmoved spectator of the griefs around him, and might be seen in Hanover and in Lowantica Valley, cheering the faith and inspiring the courage of his suffering men." * It was this paternal care and sympathy which attached his troops personally to him. They saw that he regarded them, not with the eye of a general, but of a patriot, whose heart yearned toward them as countrymen suffering in one common cause.

A striking contrast was offered throughout the winter and spring, between the rival commanders, Howe at New York,

* Notes of the Rev. Joseph F. Tuttle.—MS.

and Washington at Morristown. Howe was a soldier by profession. War, with him, was a career. The camp was, for the time, country and home. Easy and indolent by nature, of convivial and luxurious habits, and somewhat addicted to gaming, he found himself in good quarters at New York, and was in no hurry to leave them.

The tories rallied around him, and the British merchants residing there regarded him with profound devotion. His officers, too, many of them young men of rank and fortune, gave a gayety and brilliancy to the place; and the wealthy royalists forgot, in a round of dinners, balls, and assemblies, the hysterical alarms they had once experienced under the military sway of Lee.

Washington, on the contrary, was a patriot soldier, grave, earnest, thoughtful, self-sacrificing. War, to him, was a painful remedy, hateful in itself, but adopted for a great national good. To the prosecution of it all his pleasures, his comforts, his natural inclinations and private interests were sacrificed; and his chosen officers were earnest and anxious like himself, with their whole thoughts directed to the success of the magnanimous struggle in which they were engaged.

So, too, the armies were contrasted. The British troops, many of them, perchance, slightly metamorphosed from vagabonds into soldiers, all mere men of the sword, were well clad, well housed, and surrounded by all the conveniences of a thoroughly appointed army with a "rebel country" to forage. The American troops for the most part were mere yeomanry, taken from their rural homes; ill sheltered, ill clad, ill fed, and ill paid; with nothing to reconcile them to their hardships but love for the soil they were defending, and the inspiring thought that it was *their country*. Wash-

ington, with paternal care, endeavored to protect them from the depraving influences of the camp. "Let vice and immorality of every kind be discouraged as much as possible in your brigade," writes he in a circular to his brigadier-generals; "and, as a chaplain is allowed to each regiment, see that the men regularly attend divine worship. Gaming of every kind is expressly forbidden, as being the foundation of evil, and the cause of many a brave and gallant officer's ruin."

CHAPTER TWO

Negotiations for Exchange of Prisoners—Case of Colonel Ethan Allen—Of General Lee—Correspondence of Washington with Sir William Howe about Exchanges of Prisoners—Referees appointed—Letters of Lee from New York—Case of Colonel Campbell—Washington's Advice to Congress on the Subject of Retaliation—His Correspondence with Lord Howe about the Treatment of Prisoners—The Horrors of the Jersey Prison-Ship and the Sugar House

A CARTEL for the exchange of prisoners had been a subject of negotiation previous to the affair of Trenton, without being adjusted. The British commanders were slow to recognize the claims to equality of those they considered rebels; Washington was tenacious in holding them up as patriots ennobled by their cause.

Among the cases which came up for attention was that of Ethan Allen, the brave, but eccentric captor of Ticonderoga. His daring attempts in the "path of renown" had cost him a world of hardships. Thrown into irons as a felon; threatened with a halter; carried to England to be tried for treason; confined in Pendennis Castle; re-transported to Halifax, and now a prisoner in New York. "I have suffered everything short of death," writes he to the Assembly of his

native State, Connecticut. He had, however, recovered health and suppleness of limb, and with them all his swelling spirit and swelling rhetoric. "I am fired," writes he, "with adequate indignation to revenge both my own and my country's wrongs. I am experimentally certain I have fortitude sufficient to face the invaders of America in the place of danger, spread with all the horrors of war." And he concludes with one of his magniloquent, but really sincere expressions of patriotism: "Provided you can hit upon some measure to procure my liberty, I will appropriate my remaining days, and freely hazard my life in the service of the colony, and maintaining the American Empire. I thought to have enrolled my name in the list of illustrious American heroes, but was nipped in the bud."

Honest Ethan Allen! his name will ever stand enrolled on that list; not illustrious, perhaps, but eminently popular.

His appeal to his native State had produced an appeal to Congress, and Washington had been instructed, considering his long imprisonment, to urge his exchange. This had scarce been urged when tidings of the capture of General Lee presented a case of still greater importance to be provided for. "I feel much for his misfortune," writes Washington, "and am sensible that in his captivity our country has lost a warm friend and an able officer." By direction of Congress, he had sent in a flag to inquire about Lee's treatment, and to convey him a sum of money. This was just previous to the second crossing of the Delaware.

Lee was now reported to be in rigorous confinement in New York, and treated with harshness and indignity. The British professed to consider him a deserter, he having been a lieutenant-colonel in their service, although he alleged that he had resigned his commission before joining the American

army. Two letters which he addressed to General Howe were returned to him unopened, inclosed in a cover directed to *Lieutenant-colonel Lee.*

On the 13th of January, Washington addressed the following letter to Sir William Howe: "I am directed by Congress to propose an exchange of five of the Hessian field-officers taken at Trenton for Major-general Lee; or, if this proposal should not be accepted, to demand his liberty upon parole, within certain bounds, as has ever been granted to your officers in our custody. I am informed, upon good authority, that your reason for keeping him hitherto in stricter confinement than usual is, that you do not look upon him in the light of a common prisoner of war, but as a deserter from the British service, as his resignation has never been accepted, and that you intend to try him as such by a court-martial. I will not undertake to determine how far this doctrine may be justifiable among yourselves; but I must give you warning, that Major-general Lee is looked upon as an officer belonging to, and under the protection of, the United Independent States of America, and that any violence you may commit upon his life and liberty will be severely retaliated upon the lives or liberties of the British officers, or those of their foreign allies in our hands."

In this letter he likewise adverted to the treatment of American prisoners in New York; several who had recently been released having given the most shocking account of the barbarities they had experienced, "which their miserable, emaciated countenances confirmed."—"I would beg," added he, "that some certain rule of conduct toward prisoners may be settled; and, if you are determined to make captivity as distressing as possible, let me know it, that we may be upon equal terms, for your conduct shall regulate mine."

Sir William, in reply, proposed to send an officer of rank to Washington, to confer upon a mode of exchange and subsistence of prisoners. "This expedient," observes he, "appearing to me effectual for settling all differences, will, I hope, be the means of preventing a repetition of the improper terms in which your letter is expressed and founded on the grossest misrepresentations. I shall not make any further comment upon it than to assure you that your threats of retaliating upon the innocent such punishment as may be decreed in the circumstances of Mr. Lee by the laws of his country will not divert me from my duty in any respect; at the same time, you may rest satisfied that the proceedings against him will not be precipitated; and I trust that, in this, or in any other event in the course of my command, you will not have just cause to accuse me of inhumanity, prejudice, or passion."

Sir William, in truth, was greatly perplexed with respect to Lee, and had written to England to Lord George Germaine for instructions in the case. "General Lee," writes he, "being considered in the light of a deserter, is kept a close prisoner; but I do not bring him to trial, as a doubt has arisen whether, by a public resignation of his half pay prior to his entry into the rebel army, he was amenable to the military law as a deserter."

The proposal of Sir William, that all disputed points relative to the exchange and subsistence of prisoners should be adjusted by referees, led to the appointment of two officers for the purpose; Colonel Walcott by General Howe, and Colonel Harrison, "the old secretary," by Washington. In the contemplated exchanges was that of one of the Hessian field-officers for Colonel Ethan Allen.

The haughty spirit of Lee had experienced a severe hu-

miliation in the late catastrophe; his pungent and caustic humor is at an end. In a letter addressed shortly afterward to Washington, and inclosing one to Congress which Lord and General Howe had permitted him to send, he writes, "as the contents are of the last importance to me, and perhaps not less so to the community, I must earnestly entreat, my dear general, that you dispatch it immediately, and order the Congress to be as expeditious as possible."

The letter contained a request that two or three gentlemen might be sent immediately to New York, to whom he would communicate what he conceived to be of the greatest importance. "If my own interest were alone at stake," writes he, "I flatter myself that the Congress would not hesitate a single instant in acquiescing in my request; but this is far from the case; the interests of the public are equally concerned. . . . Lord and General Howe will grant a safe conduct to the gentlemen deputed."

The letter having been read in Congress, Washington was directed to inform General Lee that they were pursuing and would continue to pursue every means in their power to provide for his personal safety, and to obtain his liberty; but that they considered it improper to send any of their body to communicate with him, and could not perceive how it would tend to his advantage or the interest of the public.

Lee repeated his request, but with no better success. He felt this refusal deeply; as a brief, sad note to Washington indicates.

"It is a most unfortunate circumstance for myself, and I think not less so for the public, that Congress have not thought proper to comply with my request. It could not possibly have been attended with any ill consequences, and

might with good ones. At least it was an indulgence which I thought my situation entitled me to. But I am unfortunate in everything, and this stroke is the severest I have yet experienced. God send you a different fate. Adieu, my dear general.

"Yours most truly and affectionately,

"CHARLES LEE."

How different from the humorous, satirical, self-confident tone of his former letters. Yet Lee's actual treatment was not so harsh as had been represented. He was in close confinement, it is true; but three rooms had been fitted up for his reception in the Old City Hall of New York, having nothing of the look of a prison, excepting that they were secured by bolts and bars.

Congress, in the meantime, had resorted to their threatened measure of retaliation. On the 29th of February they had resolved that the Board of War be directed immediately to order the five Hessian field-officers and Lieutenant-colonel Campbell into safe and close custody, "it being the unalterable resolution of Congress to retaliate on them the same punishment as may be inflicted on the person of General Lee."

The Colonel Campbell here mentioned had commanded one of General Fraser's battalions of Highlanders, and had been captured on board of a transport in Nantasket road, in the preceding summer. He was a member of Parliament, and a gentleman of fortune. Retaliation was carried to excess in regard to him, for he was thrown into the common jail at Concord in Massachusetts.

From his prison he made an appeal to Washington, which at once touched his quick sense of justice. He immediately

wrote to the council of Massachusetts Bay, quoting the words of the resolution of Congress. "By this you will observe," adds he, "that *exactly the same treatment* is to be shown to Colonel Campbell and the Hessian officers that General Howe shows to General Lee, and as he is only confined to a commodious house with genteel accommodations, we have no right or reason to be more severe on Colonel Campbell, who I would wish should upon the receipt of this be removed from his present situation, and be put into a house where he may live comfortably."

In a letter to the President of Congress on the following day, he gives his moderating counsels on the whole subject of retaliation. "Though I sincerely commiserate," writes he, "the misfortunes of General Lee, and feel much for his present unhappy situation, yet with all possible deference to the opinion of Congress, I fear that these resolutions will not have the desired effect, are founded in impolicy, and will, if adhered to, produce consequences of an extensive and melancholy nature." . . .

"The balance of prisoners is greatly against us, and a general regard to the happiness of the whole should mark our conduct. Can we imagine that our enemies will not mete the same punishments, the same indignities, the same cruelties, to those belonging to us, in their possession, that we impose on theirs in our power? Why should we suppose them to possess more humanity than we have ourselves? Or why should an ineffectual attempt to relieve the distresses of one brave, unfortunate man, involve many more in the same calamities? . . . Suppose," continues he, "the treatment prescribed for the Hessians should be pursued, will it not establish what the enemy have been aiming to effect by every artifice and the grossest misrepresentations—I mean

an opinion of our enmity toward them, and of the cruel treatment they experience when they fall into our hands, a prejudice which we on our part have heretofore thought it politic to suppress, and to root out by every act of lenity and of kindness?"

"Many more objections," added he, "might be subjoined, were they material. I shall only observe that the present state of the army, if it deserves that name, will not authorize the language of retaliation or the style of menace. This will be conceded by all who know that the whole of our force is weak and trifling, and composed of militia (a very few regular troops excepted) whose service is on the eve of expiring."

In a letter to Mr. Robert Morris, also, he writes: "I wish, with all my heart, that Congress had gratified General Lee in his request. If not too late, I wish they would do it still. I can see no possible evil that can result from it; some good, I think, might. The request to see a gentleman or two came from the *general*, not from the commissioners; there could have been no harm, therefore, in hearing what *he* had to say on *any* subject, especially as he had declared that his own personal interest was deeply concerned. The resolve to put in close confinement Lieutenant-colonel Campbell and the Hessian field-officers, in order to retaliate upon them General Lee's punishment, is, in my opinion, injurious in every point of view, and must have been entered into without due attention to the consequences. . . . If the resolve of Congress respecting General Lee strikes you in the same point of view it has done me, I could wish you would signify as much to that body, as I really think it fraught with every evil."

Washington was not always successful in instilling his wise moderation into public councils. Congress adhered to

their vindictive policy, merely directing that no other hardships should be inflicted on the captive officers than such confinement as was necessary to carry their resolve into effect. As to their refusal to grant the request of Lee, Robert Morris surmised they were fearful of the injurious effect that might be produced in the court of France, should it be reported that members of Congress visited General Lee by permission of the British commissioners. There were other circumstances besides the treatment of General Lee to produce this indignant sensibility on the part of Congress. Accounts were rife at this juncture of the cruelties and indignities almost invariably experienced by American prisoners at New York; and an active correspondence on the subject was going on between Washington and the British commanders, at the same time with that regarding General Lee.

The captive Americans who had been in the naval service were said to be confined, officers and men, in prison-ships, which, for their loathsome condition, and the horrors and sufferings of all kinds experienced on board of them, had acquired the appellation of *floating hells*. Those who had been in the land service were crowded into jails and dungeons like the vilest malefactors; and were represented as pining in cold, in filth, in hunger, and nakedness.

"Our poor devoted soldiers," writes an eye-witness, "were scantily supplied with provisions of bad quality, wretchedly clothed, and destitute of sufficient fuel, if indeed they had any. Disease was the inevitable consequence, and their prisons soon became hospitals. A fatal malady was generated, and the mortality, to every heart not steeled by the spirit of party, was truly deplorable." * According to popu-

* Graydon's Memoirs, p. 232.

lar account, the prisoners confined on shipboard, and on shore, were perishing by hundreds.

A statement made by Captain Gamble, recently confined on board of a prison-ship, had especially roused the ire of Congress, and by their directions had produced a letter from Washington to Lord Howe. "I am sorry," writes he, "that I am under the disagreeable necessity of troubling your lordship with a letter, almost wholly on the subject of the cruel treatment which our officers and men in the naval department, who are unhappy enough to fall into your hands, receive on board the prison-ships in the harbor of New York." After specifying the case of Captain Gamble, and adding a few particulars, he proceeds: "From the opinion I have ever been taught to entertain of your lordship's humanity, I will not suppose that you are privy to proceedings of so cruel and unjustifiable a nature; and I hope that, upon making the proper inquiry, you will have the matter so regulated that the unhappy persons whose lot is captivity may not in future have the miseries of cold, disease, and famine added to their other misfortunes. You may call us rebels, and say that we deserve no better treatment; but remember, my lord, that, supposing us rebels, we still have feelings as keen and sensible as loyalists, and will, if forced to it, most assuredly retaliate upon those upon whom we look as the unjust invaders of our rights, liberties, and properties. I should not have said thus much, but my injured countrymen have long called upon me to endeavor to obtain a redress of their grievances, and I should think myself as culpable as those who inflict such severities upon them, were I to continue silent," etc.

Lord Howe, in reply (Jan. 17), expresses himself surprised at the matter and language of Washington's letter, "so different from the liberal vein of sentiment he had been

habituated to expect on every occasion of personal intercourse or correspondence with him." He was surprised, too, that "the idle and unnatural report" of Captain Gamble, respecting the dead and dying, and the neglect of precautions against infection, should meet with any credit. "Attention to preserve the lives of these men," writes he, "whom we esteem the misled subjects of the king, is a duty as binding on us where we are able from circumstances to execute it with effect, as any you can plead for the interest you profess in their welfare."

He denied that prisoners were ill-treated in his particular department (the naval). They had been allowed the general liberty of the prison-ship, until a successful attempt of some to escape had rendered it necessary to restrain the rest within such limits as left the commanding parts of the ship in possession of the guard. They had the same provisions in quality and quantity that were furnished to the seamen of his own ship. The want of cleanliness was the result of their own indolence and neglect. In regard to health, they had the constant attendance of an American surgeon, a fellow prisoner; who was furnished with medicines from the king's stores; and the visits of the physician of the fleet.

"As I abhor every imputation of wanton cruelty in multiplying the miseries of the wretched," observes his lordship, "or of treating them with needless severity, I have taken the trouble to state these several facts."

In regard to the hint of retaliation, he leaves it to Washington to act therein as he should think fit; but adds he grandly, "the innocent at my disposal will not have any severities to apprehend from me on that account."

We have quoted this correspondence the more freely, because it is on a subject deeply worn into the American mind;

and about which we have heard too many particulars, from childhood upward, from persons of unquestionable veracity, who suffered in the cause, to permit us to doubt about the fact. The *Jersey Prison-ship* is proverbial in our Revolutionary history; and the bones of the unfortunate patriots who perished on board form a monument on the Long Island shore. The horrors of the *Sugar House*, converted into a prison, are traditional in New York; and the brutal tyranny of Cunningham, the provost-marshal, over men of worth confined in the common jail for the sin of patriotism, has been handed down from generation to generation.

That Lord Howe and Sir William were ignorant of the extent of these atrocities we really believe, but it was their duty to be well informed. War is, at best, a cruel trade, that habituates those who follow it to regard the sufferings of others with indifference. There is no doubt, too, that a feeling of contumely deprived the patriot prisoners of all sympathy in the early stages of the Revolution. They were regarded as criminals rather than captives. The stigma of *rebels* seemed to take from them all the indulgences, scanty and miserable as they are, usually granted to prisoners of war. The British officers looked down with haughty contempt upon the American officers who had fallen into their hands. The British soldiery treated them with insolent scurrility. It seemed as if the very ties of consanguinity rendered their hostility more intolerant, for it was observed that American prisoners were better treated by the Hessians than by the British. It was not until our countrymen had made themselves formidable by their successes that they were treated, when prisoners, with common decency and humanity.

The difficulties arising out of the case of General Lee

interrupted the operations with regard to the exchange of prisoners; and gallant men, on both sides, suffered prolonged detention in consequence; and among the number the brave, but ill-starred Ethan Allen.

Lee, in the meantime, remained in confinement, until directions with regard to him should be received from government. Events, however, had diminished his importance in the eyes of the enemy; he was no longer considered the American Palladium. "As the capture of the Hessians and the maneuvers against the British took place after the surprise of General Lee," observes a London writer of the day, "we find that he is not the only efficient officer in the American service." *

CHAPTER THREE

Exertions to form a New Army—Calls on the Different States—Insufficiency of the Militia—Washington's Care for the Yeomanry—Dangers in the Northern Department—Winter Attack on Ticonderoga apprehended—Exertions to re-enforce Schuyler—Precarious State of Washington's Army—Conjectures as to the Designs of the Enemy—Expedition of the British against Peekskill

THE early part of the year brought the annual embarrassments caused by short enlistments. The brief term of service for which the Continental soldiery had enlisted, a few months perhaps, at most a year, were expiring; and the men, glad to be released from camp duty, were hastening to their rustic homes. Militia had to be the dependence, until the new army could be raised and organized; and Washing-

* Am. Archives, 5th Series, iii. 1244.

ton called on the council of safety of Pennsylvania speedily to furnish temporary re-enforcements of the kind.

All his officers that could be spared were ordered away, some to recruit, some to collect the scattered men of the different regiments, who were dispersed, he said, almost over the continent. General Knox was sent off to Massachusetts, to expedite the raising of a battalion of artillery. Different States were urged to levy and equip their quotas for the Continental army. "Nothing but the united efforts of every State in America," writes he, "can save us from disgrace and probably from ruin."

Rhode Island is reproached with raising troops for home service before furnishing its supply to the general army. "If each State," writes he, "were to prepare for its own defense independent of each other, they would all be conquered, one by one. *Our success must depend on a firm union, and a strict adherence to the general plan.*" *

He deplores the fluctuating state of the army while depending on militia; full one day, almost disbanded the next. "I am much afraid that the enemy, one day or other, taking advantage of one of these temporary weaknesses, will make themselves masters of our magazines of stores, arms, and artillery."

The militia, too, on being dismissed, were generally suffered by their officers to carry home with them the arms with which they had been furnished, so that the armory was in a manner scattered over all the world, and forever lost to the public.

Then an earnest word is spoken by him in behalf of the yeomanry, whose welfare always lay near his heart. "You

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* Letter to Governor Cooke, Sparks, iv. 285.

must be fully sensible," writes he, "of the hardships imposed upon individuals, and how detrimental it must be to the public to have farmers and tradesmen frequently called out of the field, as militia men, whereby a total stop is put to arts and agriculture, without which we cannot long subsist."

While thus anxiously exerting himself to strengthen his own precarious army, the security of the Northern department was urged upon his attention. Schuyler represented it as in need of re-enforcements and supplies of all kinds. He apprehended that Carleton might make an attack upon Ticonderoga, as soon as he could cross Lake Champlain on the ice; that important fortress was under the command of a brave officer, Colonel Anthony Wayne, but its garrison had dwindled down to six or seven hundred men, chiefly New England militia. In the present destitute situation of his department as to troops, Schuyler feared that Carleton might not only succeed in an attempt on Ticonderoga, but might push his way to Albany.

He had written in vain to the Convention of New York, and to the Eastern States, for re-enforcements, and he entreated Washington to aid him with his influence. He wished to have his army composed of troops from as many different States as possible; the Southern people, having a greater spirit of discipline and subordination, might, he thought, introduce it among the Eastern people.

He wished also for the assistance of a general officer or two in his department. "I am alone," writes he, "distracted with a variety of cares, and no one to take part of the burden." *

Although Washington considered a winter attack of the

* Schuyler's Letter Book, MS.

kind specified by Schuyler too difficult and dangerous to be very probable, he urged re-enforcements from Massachusetts and New Hampshire, whence they could be furnished most speedily. Massachusetts, in fact, had already determined to send four regiments to Schuyler's aid as soon as possible.

Washington disapproved of a mixture of troops in the present critical juncture, knowing, he said, "the difficulty of maintaining harmony among men from different States, and bringing them to lay aside all attachments and distinctions of a local and provincial nature, and *consider themselves the same people, engaged in the same noble struggle, and having one general interest to defend.*" *

The quota of Massachusetts, under the present arrangement of the army, was fifteen regiments: and Washington ordered General Heath, who was in Massachusetts, to forward them to Ticonderoga as fast as they could be raised.†

Notwithstanding all Washington's exertions in behalf of the army under his immediate command, it continued to be deplorably in want of re-enforcements, and it was necessary to maintain the utmost vigilance at all his posts to prevent his camp from being surprised. The operations of the enemy might be delayed by the bad condition of the roads, and the want of horses to move their artillery, but he anticipated an attack as soon as the roads were passable, and apprehended a disastrous result unless speedily re-enforced.

"The enemy," writes he, "must be ignorant of our numbers and situation, or they would never suffer us to remain unmolested, and I must tax myself with imprudence in committing the fact to paper, lest this letter should fall into other

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* Schuyler's Letter Book, MS.

† Sparks. Washington's Writings, iv. 361, note.

hands than those for which it is intended." And again: "It is not in my power to make Congress fully sensible of the real situation of our affairs, and that it is with difficulty I can keep the life and soul of the army together. In a word, they are at a distance; they think it is but to say *presto, begone*, and everything is done; they seem not to have any conception of the difficulty and perplexity of those who have to execute."

The designs of the enemy being mere matter of conjecture, measures varied accordingly. As the season advanced, Washington was led to believe that Philadelphia would be their first object at the opening of the campaign, and that they would bring round all their troops from Canada by water to aid in the enterprise. Under this persuasion he wrote to General Heath, ordering him to send eight of the Massachusetts battalions to Peekskill, instead of Ticonderoga; and explained his reasons for so doing in a letter to Schuyler. At Peekskill, he observed, "they would be well placed to give support to any of the Eastern or Middle States; or to oppose the enemy, should they design to penetrate the country up the Hudson; or to cover New England, should they invade it. Should they move westward, the Eastern and Southern troops could easily form a junction, and this, besides, would oblige the enemy to leave a much stronger garrison at New York. Even should the enemy pursue their first plan of invasion from Canada, the troops at Peekskill would not be badly placed to re-enforce Ticonderoga, and cover the country around Albany. I am very sure," concludes he, "the operations of this army will, in a great degree, govern the motions of that in Canada. *If this is held at bay, curbed and confined, the Northern army will not dare attempt to penetrate.*" The last sen-

tence will be found to contain the policy which governed Washington's personal movements throughout the campaign.

On the 18th of March he dispatched General Greene to Philadelphia, to lay before Congress such matters as he could not venture to communicate by letter.

"He is an able and good officer," writes he, "who has my entire confidence and is intimately acquainted with my ideas."

Greene had scarce departed when the enemy began to show signs of life. The delay in the arrival of artillery, more than his natural indolence, had kept General Howe from formally taking the field; he now made preparations for the next campaign, by detaching troops to destroy the American deposits of military stores. One of the chief of these was at Peekskill, the very place whither Washington had directed Heath to send troops from Massachusetts; and which he thought of making a central point of assemblage. Howe terms it "the port of that rough and mountainous tract called the Manor of Courtlandt." Brigadier-general McDougall had the command of it in the absence of General Heath, but his force did not exceed two hundred and fifty men.

As soon as the Hudson was clear of ice, a squadron of vessels of war and transports, with five hundred troops under Colonel Bird, ascended the river. McDougall had intelligence of the intended attack, and while the ships were making their way across the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay, exerted himself to remove as much as possible of the provisions and stores to Forts Montgomery and Constitution in the Highlands. On the morning of the 23d, the whole squadron came to anchor in Peekskill Bay; and five hundred men landed in Lent's Cove, on the south side of the bay,

whence they pushed forward with four light field-pieces drawn by sailors. On their approach, McDougall set fire to the barracks and principal storehouses, and retreated about two miles to a strong post, commanding the entrance to the Highlands and the road to Continental Village, the place of the deposits. It was the post which had been noted by Washington in the preceding year, where a small force could make a stand and hurl down masses of rock on their assailants. Hence McDougall sent an express to Lieutenant-colonel Marinus Willett, who had charge of Fort Constitution, to hasten to his assistance.

The British, finding the wharf in flames where they had intended to embark their spoils, completed the conflagration, besides destroying severals mall craft laden with provisions. They kept possession of the place till the following day, when a scouting party, which had advanced toward the entrance of the Highlands, was encountered by Colonel Marinus Willett with a detachment from Fort Constitution, and driven back to the main body after a sharp skirmish, in which nine of the marauders were killed. Four more were slain on the banks of Canopas Creek as they were setting fire to some boats. The enemy were disappointed in the hope of carrying off a great deal of booty, and finding the country around was getting under arms, they contented themselves with the mischief they had done, and re-embarked in the evening by moonlight, when the whole squadron swept down the Hudson.

CHAPTER FOUR

Schuyler's Affairs in the Northern Department—Misunderstandings with Congress—Gives offense by a Reproachful Letter—Office of Adjutant-General offered to Gates—Declined by him—Schuyler Reprimanded by Congress for his Reproachful Letter—Gates appointed to the Command at Ticonderoga—Schuyler considers himself virtually suspended—Takes his Seat as a Delegate to Congress, and Claims a Court of Inquiry—Has Command at Philadelphia

WE have now to enter upon a tissue of circumstances connected with the Northern department, which will be found materially to influence the course of affairs in that quarter throughout the current year, and ultimately to be fruitful of annoyance to Washington himself. To make these more clear to the reader, it is necessary to revert to events in the preceding year.

The question of command between Schuyler and Gates, when settled as we have shown by Congress, had caused no interruption to the harmony of intercourse between these generals.

Schuyler directed the affairs of the department with energy and activity from his headquarters in Albany, where they had been fixed by Congress, while Gates, subordinate to him, commanded the post of Ticonderoga.

The disappointment of an independent command, however, still rankled in the mind of the latter, and was kept alive by the officious suggestions of meddling friends. In the course of the autumn, his hopes in this respect revived.

Schuyler was again disgusted with the service. In the discharge of his various and harassing duties, he had been annoyed by sectional jealousies and ill will. His motives and measures had been maligned. The failures in Canada had been attributed to him, and he had repeatedly entreated Congress to order an inquiry into the many charges made against him, "that he might not any longer be insulted."

"I assure you," writes he to Gates, on the 25th of August, "that I am so sincerely tired of abuse that I will let my enemies arrive at the completion of their wishes by retiring, as soon as I shall have been tried; and attempt to serve my injured country in some other way, where envy and detraction will have no temptation to follow me."

On the 14th of September, he actually offered his resignation of his commission as major-general, and of every other office and appointment; still claiming a court of inquiry on his conduct, and expressing his determination to fulfill the duties of a good citizen, and promote the weal of his native country, but in some other capacity. "I trust," writes he, "that my successor, whoever he may be, will find that matters are as prosperously arranged in this department as the nature of the service will admit. I shall most readily give him any information and assistance in my power."

He immediately wrote to General Gates, apprising him of his having sent in his resignation. "It is much to be lamented," writes he, "that calumny is so much cherished in this unhappy country, and that so few of the servants of the public escape the malevolence of a set of insidious miscreants. It has driven me to the necessity of resigning."

As the command of the department, should his resignation be accepted, would of course devolve on Gates, he assures him he will render every assistance in his power to

any officer whom Gates might appoint to command in Albany.

All his letters to Gates, while they were thus in relation in the department, had been kind and courteous; beginning with, "My dear General," and ending with, "adieu," and "every friendly wish." Schuyler was a warm-hearted man, and his expressions were probably sincere.

The hopes of Gates, inspired by this proffered resignation, were doomed to be again overclouded. Schuyler was informed by President Hancock, "that Congress, during the present state of affairs, could not consent to accept of his resignation; but requested that he would continue in the command he held, and be assured that the aspersions thrown out by his enemies against his character had no influence upon the minds of the members of that House; and that, more effectually to put calumny to silence, they would at an early day appoint a committee to inquire fully into his conduct, which they trusted would establish his reputation in the opinion of all good men."

Schuyler received the resolve of Congress with grim acquiescence, but showed in his reply that he was but half soothed. "At this very critical juncture," writes he, October 16, "I shall waive those remarks which, in justice to myself, I must make at a future day. The calumny of my enemies has arisen to its height. Their malice is incapable of heightening the injury. . . . In the alarming situation of our affairs, I shall continue to act some time longer, but Congress must prepare to put the care of this department into other hands. I shall be able to render my country better services in another line: less exposed to a repetition of the injuries I have sustained."

He had remained at his post, therefore, discharging the

various duties of his department with his usual zeal and activity; and Gates, at the end of the campaign, had repaired, as we have shown, to the vicinity of Congress, to attend the fluctuation of events.

Circumstances in the course of the winter had put the worthy Schuyler again on points of punctilio with Congress. Among some letters intercepted by the enemy and retaken by the Americans was one from Colonel Joseph Trumbull, the commissary-general, insinuating that General Schuyler had secreted or suppressed a commission sent for his brother, Colonel John Trumbull, as deputy adjutant-general.* The purport of the letter was reported to Schuyler. He spurned at the insinuation. "If it be true that he has asserted such a thing," writes he to the president, "I shall expect from Congress that justice which is due to me."

Three weeks later he inclosed to the president a copy of Trumbull's letter. "I hope," writes he, "Congress will not entertain the least idea that I can tamely submit to such injurious treatment. I expect they will immediately do what is incumbent on them on the occasion. Until Mr. Trumbull and I are upon a footing, I cannot do what the laws of honor and a regard to my own reputation render indispensably necessary. Congress can put us on a par by dismissing one or the other from the service."

Congress failed to comply with the general's request. They added also to his chagrin, by dismissing from the service an army physician, in whose appointment he had particularly interested himself.

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* The reader may recollect that it was Commissary-general Trumbull who wrote the letter to Gates calculated to inflame his jealousy against Schuyler, when the question of command had risen between them. (See pt. ii., ch. 28.)

Schuyler was a proud-spirited man, and, at times, somewhat irascible. In a letter to Congress on the 8th of February, he observed: "As Dr. Stringer had my recommendation to the office he has sustained, perhaps it was a compliment due to me that I should have been advised of the reason of his dismission."

And again: "I was in hopes some notice would have been taken of the odious suspicion contained in Mr. Commissary Trumbull's intercepted letter. I really feel myself deeply chagrined on the occasion. I am incapable of the meanness he suspects me of, and I confidently expected that Congress would have done me that justice which it was in their power to give, and which I humbly conceive they ought to have done."

This letter gave great umbrage to Congress, but no immediate answer was made to it.

About this time the office of adjutant-general, which had remained vacant ever since the resignation of Colonel Reed, to the great detriment of the service, especially now when a new army was to be formed, was offered to General Gates, who had formerly filled it with ability; and President Hancock informed him, by letter, of the earnest desire of Congress that he should resume it, retaining his present rank and pay.

Gates almost resented the proposal. "Unless the commander-in-chief earnestly makes the same request with your Excellency," replies he, "all my endeavors as adjutant-general would be vain and fruitless. I had last year the honor to command in the second post in America; and had the good fortune to prevent the enemy from making their so much wished-for junction with General Howe. After this, to be expected to dwindle again to the adjutant-general,

requires more philosophy on my part, and something more than words on yours." *

He wrote to Washington to the same effect, but declared that, should it be his Excellency's wish, he would resume the office with alacrity.

Washington promptly replied that he had often wished it in secret, though he had never even hinted at it; supposing Gates might have scruples on the subject. "You cannot conceive the pleasure I feel," adds he, "when you tell me that, if it is my desire that you should resume your former office, you will with cheerfulness and alacrity proceed to Morristown." He thanks him for this mark of attention to his wishes; assures him that he looks upon his resumption of the office as the only means of giving form and regularity to the new army; and will be glad to receive a line from him mentioning the time he would leave Philadelphia.

He received no such line. Gates had a higher object in view. A letter from Schuyler to Congress had informed that body that he should set out for Philadelphia about the 21st of March, and should immediately on his arrival require the promised inquiry into his conduct. Gates, of course, was acquainted with this circumstance. He knew Schuyler had given offense to Congress; he knew he had been offended on his own part, and had repeatedly talked of resigning. He had active friends in Congress ready to push his interests. On the 12th of March his letter to President Hancock about the proffered adjutancy was read, and ordered to be taken into consideration on the following day.

On the 13th, a committee of five was appointed to confer with him upon the general state of affairs.

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* Gates's Papers, N. Y. Hist. Lib.

KOSCIUSZKO.
Irving, Vol. Thirteen, p. 392.

On the 15th, the letter of General Schuyler of the 3d of February, which had given such offense, was brought before the House, and it was resolved that his suggestion concerning the dismission of Dr. Stringer was highly derogatory to the honor of Congress, and that it was expected his letters in future would be written in a style suitable to the dignity of the representative body of these free and independent States, and to his own character as their officer. His expressions, too, respecting the intercepted letter, that he had expected Congress would have done him all the justice in their power, were pronounced, "to say the least, ill-advised and highly indecent." *

While Schuyler was thus in partial eclipse, the House proceeded to appoint a general officer for the Northern department, of which he had stated it to be in need.

On the 25th of March, Gates received the following note from President Hancock: "I have it in charge to direct that you repair to Ticonderoga immediately, and take command of the army stationed in that department."

Gates obeyed with alacrity. Again the vision of an independent command floated before his mind, and he was on his way to Albany at the time that Schuyler, ignorant of this new arrangement, was journeying to Philadelphia. Gates was accompanied by Brigadier-general Fermois, a French officer, recently commissioned in the Continental army. A rumor of his approach preceded him. "What are the terms on which Gates is coming on?" was asked in Albany. "Has Schuyler been superseded, or is he to be so, or has he resigned?" For a time all was rumor and conjecture. A report reached his family that he was to be

* Journals of Congress.

divested of all titles and rank other than that of Philip Schuyler, Esquire. They heard it with joy, knowing the carking cares and annoyances that had beset him in his command. His military friends deprecated it as a great loss to the service.*

When Gates arrived in Albany, Colonel Varick, Schuyler's secretary, waited on him with a message from Mrs. Schuyler, inviting him to take up his quarters at the general's house, which was in the vicinity. He declined, as the dispatch of affairs required him to be continually in town; but took his breakfast with Mrs. Schuyler the next morning. He remained in Albany, unwilling to depart for Ticonderoga until there should be sufficient troops there to support him.

Schuyler arrived in Philadelphia in the second week in April, and found himself superseded in effect by General Gates in the Northern department. He inclosed to the committee of Albany the recent resolutions of Congress, passed before his arrival. "By these," writes he, "you will readily perceive that I shall not return a general. Under what influence it has been brought about I am not at liberty now to mention. On my return to Albany I shall give the committee the fullest information." †

Taking his seat in Congress as a delegate from New York, he demanded the promised investigation of his conduct during the time he had held a command in the army. It was his intention, when the scrutiny had taken place, to resign his commission and retire from the service. On the 18th, a committee of inquiry was appointed, as at his request, composed of a member from each State.

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* Letter of Colonel Richard Varick. Schuyler's Letter Book.

† Schuyler's Letter Book.

In the meantime, as second major-general of the United States (Lee being the first), he held active command at Philadelphia, forming a camp on the western side of the Delaware, completing the works on Fort Island, throwing up works on Red Bank, and accelerating the dispatch of troops and provisions to the commander-in-chief. During his sojourn at Philadelphia, also, he contributed essentially to reorganize the commissary department; digesting rules for its regulations which were mainly adopted by Congress.

CHAPTER FIVE

Foreign Officers Candidates for Situations in the Army—Difficulties in adjusting Questions of Rank—Ducoudray—Conway—Kosciuszko—Washington's Guards—Arnold Omitted in the Army Promotions—Washington takes his Part—British Expedition against Danbury—Destruction of American Stores—Connecticut Yeomanry in Arms—Skirmish at Ridgefield—Death of General Wooster—Gallant Services of Arnold—Rewarded by Congress—Exploit of Colonel Meigs at Sag Harbor

THE fame of the American struggle for independence was bringing foreign officers as candidates for admission into the patriot army, and causing great embarrassment to the commander-in-chief. "They seldom," writes Washington, "bring more than a commission and a passport; which we know may belong to a bad as well as a good officer. Their ignorance of our language, and their inability to recruit men, are insurmountable obstacles to their being ingrafted in our Continental battalions; for our officers, who have raised their men, and have served through the war upon pay that has not hitherto borne their expenses, would be disgusted if foreigners were put over their head; and I assure you,

few or none of these gentlemen look lower than field-officer's commissions. . . . Some general mode of disposing of them must be adopted, for it is ungenerous to keep them in suspense, and a great charge to themselves; but I am at a loss to know how to point out this mode."

Congress determined that no foreign officers should receive commissions who were not well acquainted with the English language, and did not bring strong testimonials of their abilities. Still there was embarrassment. Some came with brevet commissions from the French government, and had been assured by Mr. Deane, American commissioner at Paris, that they would have the same rank in the American army. This would put them above American officers of merit and hard service, whose commissions were of more recent date. One Monsieur Ducoudray, on the strength of an agreement with Mr. Deane, expected to have the rank of major-general, and to be put at the head of the artillery. Washington deprecated the idea of intrusting a department on which the very salvation of the army might depend to a foreigner, who had no other tie to bind him to the interests of the country than honor; besides, he observed, it would endanger the loss to the service of General Knox, "a man of great military reading, sound judgment, and clear perceptions. He has conducted the affairs of that department with honor to himself and advantage to the public, and will resign if any one is put over him."

In fact, the report that Ducoudray was to be a major-general, with a commission dated in the preceding year, caused a commotion among the American officers of that rank, but whose commissions were of later date. Congress eventually determined not to ratify the contract entered into between Mr. Deane and Monsieur Ducoudray, and resolved

that the commissions of foreign officers received into the service should bear date on the day of their being filled up by Washington.

Among the foreign candidates for appointments was one Colonel Conway, a native of Ireland, but who, according to his own account, had been thirty years in the service of France, and claimed to be a chevalier of the order of St. Louis, of which he wore the decoration. Mr. Deane had recommended him to Washington as an officer of merit, and had written to Congress that he considered him well qualified for the office of adjutant or brigadier-general, and that he had given him reason to hope for one or the other of these appointments. Colonel Conway pushed for that of brigadier-general. It had been conferred some time before by Congress on two French officers, De Fermois and Deborre, who, he had observed, had been inferior to him in the French service, and it would be mortifying now to hold rank below them.

"I cannot pretend," writes Washington to the president, "to speak of Colonel Conway's merits or abilities of my own knowledge. He appears to be a man of candor, and, if he has been in service as long as he says, I should suppose him infinitely better qualified to serve us than many who have been promoted, as he speaks our language."

Conway accordingly received the rank of brigadier-general, of which he subsequently proved himself unworthy. He was boastful and presumptuous, and became noted for his intrigues, and for a despicable cabal against the commander-in-chief, which went by his name, and of which we shall have to speak hereafter.

A candidate of a different stamp had presented himself in the preceding year, the gallant, generous-spirited Thad-

deus Kosciuszko. He was a Pole, of an ancient and noble family of Lithuania, and had been educated for the profession of arms at the military school at Warsaw, and subsequently in France. Disappointed in a love affair with a beautiful lady of rank, with whom he had attempted to elope, he had emigrated to this country, and came provided with a letter of introduction from Dr. Franklin to Washington.

"What do you seek here?" inquired the commander-in-chief.

"To fight for American independence."

"What can you do?"

"Try me."

Washington was pleased with the curt, yet comprehensive reply, and with his chivalrous air and spirit; and at once received him into his family as an aid-de-camp.* Congress shortly afterward appointed him an engineer, with the rank of colonel. He proved a valuable officer throughout the Revolution, and won an honorable and lasting name in our country.

Among the regiments which had been formed in the spring one had been named, by its officers, "The Congress's Own," and another "General Washington's Life Guards." A resolve of Congress promptly appeared, pronouncing those appellations improper, and ordering that they should be discontinued. Washington's own modesty had already administered a corrective. In a letter to the President of Congress, he declared that the regiments had been so named without his consent or privity. "As soon as I heard of it," writes he, "I wrote to several of the officers in terms of severe

* Foreign Quarterly Review, vol. xv., p. 114.

reprehension, and expressly charged them to suppress the distinction, adding that all the battalions were on the same footing, and all under the general name of Continental." No man was less desirous for all individual distinctions of the kind.

Somewhat later he really formed a company for his guard. Colonel Alexander Spotswood had the selection of the men, four from each regiment; and was charged to be extremely cautious, "because," writes Washington, "it is more than probable that, in the course of the campaign, my baggage, papers, and other matters of great public import, may be committed to the sole care of these men." That the company might look well and be nearly of a size, none were to be over five feet ten, nor under five feet nine inches in stature, and to be sober, young, active, and well-made, of good character, and proud of appearing clean and soldier-like. As there would be a greater chance for fidelity among such as had family connections in the country, Spotswood was charged to send none but natives, and, if possible, men of some property. "I must insist," concludes Washington, "that, in making this choice, you give no intimation of my preference of natives, as I do not want to create any invidious distinction between them and the officers." *

Questions of rank among his generals were, as we have repeatedly shown, perpetual sources of perplexity to Washington, and too often caused by what the sarcastic Lee termed, "the stumblings of Congress"; such was the case at present. In recent army promotions, Congress had advanced Stirling, Mifflin, St. Clair, Stephen, and Lincoln, to the rank of major-general, while Arnold, their senior in

* Sparks. Writings of Washington, iv. 407.

service, and distinguished by so many brilliant exploits, was passed over and left to remain a brigadier.

Washington was surprised at not seeing his name on the list, but supposing it might have been omitted through mistake, he wrote to Arnold, who was at Providence in Rhode Island, advising him not to take any hasty step in consequence, but to allow time for recollection, promising his own endeavors to remedy any error that might have been made. He wrote also to Henry Lee in Congress, inquiring whether the omission was owing to accident or design. "Surely," said he, "a more active, a more spirited, and sensible officer, fills no department of your army. Not seeing him, then, in the list of major-generals, and no mention made of him, has given me uneasiness; as it is not presumed, being the oldest brigadier, that he will continue in service under such a slight."

Arnold was, in truth, deeply wounded by the omission. "I am greatly obliged to your Excellency," writes he to Washington, "for interesting yourself so much in respect to my appointment, which I have had no advice of, and know not by what means it was announced in the papers. Congress undoubtedly have a right of promoting those whom, from their abilities and their long and arduous services, they esteem most deserving. Their promoting junior officers to the rank of major-generals, I view as a very civil way of requesting my resignation, as unqualified for the office I hold. My commission was conferred unsolicited, and received with pleasure only as a means of serving my country. With equal pleasure I resign it, when I can no longer serve my country with honor. The person, who, void of the nice feelings of honor, will tamely condescend to give up his right, and retain a commission at the expense of his

reputation, I hold as a disgrace to the army and unworthy of the glorious cause in which we are engaged. . . . In justice, therefore, to my own character, and for the satisfaction of my friends, I must request a court of inquiry into my conduct; and though I sensibly feel the ingratitude of my countrymen, yet every personal injury shall be buried in my zeal for the safety and happiness of my country, in whose cause I have repeatedly fought and bleed, and am ready at all times to risk my life."

He subsequently intimated that he should avoid any hasty step, and should remain at his post until he could leave it without any damage to the public interest.

The principle upon which Congress had proceeded in their recent promotions was explained to Washington. The number of general officers promoted from each State was proportioned to the number of men furnished by it. Connecticut (Arnold's State) had already two major-generals, which was its full share. "I confess," writes Washington to Arnold, "this is a strange mode of reasoning; but it may serve to show you that the promotion, which was due to your seniority, was not overlooked for want of merit in you."

"The point," observes he, "is of so delicate a nature that I will not even undertake to advise. Your own feelings must be your guide. As no particular charge is alleged against you, I do not see upon what grounds you can demand a court of inquiry. Your determination not to quit your present command while any danger to the public might ensue from your leaving it, deserves my thanks, and justly entitles you to the thanks of the country."

An opportunity occurred before long for Arnold again to signalize himself.

The amount of stores destroyed at Peekskill had fallen

far short of General Howe's expectations. Something more must be done to cripple the Americans before the opening of the campaign. Accordingly, another expedition was set on foot against a still larger deposit at Danbury, within the borders of Connecticut, and between twenty and thirty miles from Peekskill.

Ex-Governor Tryon, recently commissioned major-general of provincials, conducted it, accompanied by Brigadier-general Agnew and Sir William Erskine. He had a mongrel force, two thousand strong, American, Irish, and British refugees from various parts of the continent, and made his appearance on the Sound the latter part of April, with a fleet of twenty-six sail, greatly to the disquiet of every assailable place along the coast. On the 25th, toward evening, he landed his troops on the beach at the foot of Canepo Hill, near the mouth of the Saugatuck River. The yeomanry of the neighborhood had assembled to resist them, but a few cannon-shot made them give way, and the troops set off for Danbury, about twenty-three miles distant; galled at first by a scattering fire from behind a stone fence. They were in a patriotic neighborhood. General Silliman, of the Connecticut militia, who resided at Fairfield, a few miles distant, sent out expresses to rouse the country. It so happened that General Arnold was at New Haven, between twenty and thirty miles off, on his way to Philadelphia for the purpose of settling his accounts. At the alarm of a British inroad, he forgot his injuries and irritation, mounted his horse, and, accompanied by General Wooster, hastened to join General Silliman. As they spurred forward, every farmhouse sent out its warrior, until upward of a hundred were pressing on with them, full of the fighting spirit. Lieutenant Oswald, Arnold's secretary in the Canada campaign,

who had led the forlorn hope in the attempt upon Quebec, was at this time at New Haven, enlisting men for Lamb's regiment of artillery. He, too, heard the note of alarm, and mustering his recruits, marched off with three field-pieces for the scene of action.*

In the meanwhile the British, marching all night with short haltings, reached Danbury about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 26th. There were but fifty Continental soldiers and one hundred militia in that place. These retreated, as did most of the inhabitants, excepting such as remained to take care of the sick and aged. Four men, intoxicated, as it was said, fired upon the troops from the windows of a large house. The soldiers rushed in, drove them into the cellar, set fire to the house, and left them to perish in the flames.

There was a great quantity of stores of all kinds in the village, and no vehicles to convey them to the ships. The work of destruction commenced. The soldiers made free with the liquors found in abundance; and throughout the greater part of the night there was revel, drunkenness, blasphemy and devastation. Tryon, full of anxiety, and aware that the country was rising, ordered a retreat before daylight, setting fire to the magazines to complete the destruction of the stores. The flames spread to the other edifices, and almost the whole village was soon in a blaze. The extreme darkness of a rainy night made the conflagration more balefully apparent throughout the country.

While these scenes had been transacted at Danbury, the Connecticut yeomanry had been gathering. Fairfield and the adjacent counties had poured out their minute men.

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* Life of Lamb, p. 157.

General Silliman had advanced at the head of five hundred. Generals Wooster and Arnold joined him with their chance followers, as did a few more militia. A heavy rain retarded their march; it was near midnight when they reached Bethel, within four miles of Danbury. Here they halted to take a little repose and put their arms in order, rendered almost unserviceable by the rain. They were now about six hundred strong. Wooster took the command, as first major-general of the militia of the State. Though in the sixty-eighth year of his age, he was full of ardor, with almost youthful fire and daring. A plan was concerted to punish the enemy on their retreat; and the lurid light of Danbury in flames redoubled the provocation. At dawn of day, Wooster detached Arnold with four hundred men to push across the country and take post at Ridgefield, by which the British must pass; while he with two hundred remained to hang on and harass them in flank and rear.

The British began their retreat early in the morning, conducting it in regular style, with flanking parties and a rearguard well furnished with artillery. As soon as they had passed his position, Wooster attacked the rearguard with great spirit and effect; there was sharp skirmishing until within two miles of Ridgefield, when, as the veteran was cheering on his men, who began to waver, a musket ball brought him down from his horse, and finished his gallant career. On his fall his men retreated in disorder. The delay which his attack had occasioned to the enemy had given Arnold time to throw up a kind of breastwork or barricade across the road at the north end of Ridgefield, protected by a house on the right and a high rocky bank on the left, where he took his stand with his little force, now increased to about five hundred men. At about eleven

o'clock the enemy advanced in column, with artillery and flanking parties. They were kept at bay for a time, and received several volleys from the barricade, until it was outflanked and carried. Arnold ordered a retreat, and was bringing off the rearguard, when his horse was shot under him and came down upon his knees. Arnold remained seated in the saddle, with one foot entangled in the stirrups. A tory soldier, seeing his plight, rushed toward him with fixed bayonet. He had just time to draw a pistol from the holster. "You are my prisoner," cried the tory. "Not yet!" exclaimed Arnold, and shot him dead; then, extricating his foot from the stirrup, he threw himself into the thickets of a neighboring swamp, and escaped unharmed by the bullets that whistled after him, and joined his retreating troops.

General Tryon intrenched for the night in Ridgefield, his troops having suffered greatly in their harassed retreat. The next morning, after having set fire to four houses, he continued his march for the ships. Colonel Huntington, of the Continental army, with the troops which had been stationed at Danbury, the scattered force of Wooster which had joined him, and a number of militia, hung on the rear of the enemy as soon as they were in motion. Arnold was again in the field, with his rallied forces, strengthened by Lieutenant-colonel Oswald with two companies of Lamb's artillery regiment and three field-pieces. With these he again posted himself on the enemy's route.

Difficulties and annoyances had multiplied upon the latter at every step. When they came in sight of the position where Arnold was waiting for them, they changed their route, wheeled to the left, and made for a ford of Saugatuck River. Arnold hastened to cross the bridge and take them

in flank, but they were too quick for him. Colonel Lamb had now reached the scene of action, as had about two hundred volunteers. Leaving to Oswald the charge of the artillery, he put himself at the head of the volunteers and led them up to Arnold's assistance.

The enemy, finding themselves hard pressed, pushed for Canepo Hill. They reached it in the evening, without a round of ammunition in their cartridge-boxes. As they were now within cannon-shot of their ships, the Americans ceased the pursuit. The British formed upon the high ground, brought their artillery to the front, and sent off to the ships for re-enforcements. Sir William Erskine landed a large body of marines and sailors, who drove the Americans back for some distance, and covered the embarkation of the troops. Colonel Lamb, while leading on his men gallantly to capture the British field-pieces, was wounded by a grape-shot, and Arnold, while cheering on the militia, had another horse shot under him. In the meantime, the harassed marauders effected their embarkation, and the fleet got under way.

In this inroad the enemy destroyed a considerable amount of military stores, and seventeen hundred tents prepared for the use of Washington's army in the ensuing campaign. The loss of General Wooster was deeply deplored. He survived the action long enough to be consoled in his dying moments at Danbury, by the presence of his wife and son, who hastened thither from New Haven. As to Arnold, his gallantry in this affair gained him fresh laurels, and Congress, to remedy their late error, promoted him to the rank of major-general. Still his promotion did not restore him to his former position. He was at the bottom of the list of major-generals, with four officers above him, his juniors in service. Washington felt this injustice

on the part of Congress, and wrote about it to the president. "He has certainly discovered," said he, "in every instance where he has had an opportunity, much bravery, activity, and enterprise. But what will be done about his rank? He will not act, most probably, under those he commanded but a few weeks ago."

As an additional balm to Arnold's wounded pride, Congress, a few days afterward, voted that a horse properly caparisoned should be presented to him in their name, as a token of their approbation of his gallant conduct in the late action, "in which he had one horse shot under him and another wounded." But after all he remained at the bottom of the list, and the wound still rankled in his bosom.

The destructive expeditions against the American depots of military stores were retaliated in kind by Colonel Meigs, a spirited officer, who had accompanied Arnold in his expedition through the wilderness against Quebec, and had caught something of his love for hardy exploit. Having received intelligence that the British commissaries had collected a great amount of grain, forage, and other supplies at Sag Harbor, a small port in the deep bay which forks the east end of Long Island, he crossed the Sound on the 23d of May from Guilford in Connecticut, with about one hundred and seventy men in whale boats convoyed by two armed sloops: landed on the island near Southold; carried the boats a distance of fifteen miles across the north fork of the bay, launched them into the latter, crossed it, landed within four miles of Sag Harbor, and before daybreak carried the place, which was guarded by a company of foot. A furious fire of round and grape-shot was opened upon the Americans from an armed schooner, anchored about one hundred and fifty yards from shore; and stout defense was made by the crews

of a dozen brigs and sloops lying at the wharf to take in freight; but Meigs succeeded in burning these vessels, destroying everything on shore, and carrying off ninety prisoners; among whom were the officers of the company of foot, the commissaries, and the captains of most of these small vessels. With these he and his party recrossed the bay, transported their boats again across the fork of land, launched them on the Sound, and got safe back to Guilford, having achieved all this, and traversed about ninety miles of land and water, in twenty-five hours. Washington was so highly pleased with the spirit and success of this enterprise that he publicly returned thanks to Colonel Meigs and the officers and men engaged in it. It could not fail, he said, greatly to distress the enemy in the important and essential article of forage. But it was the moral effect of the enterprise which gave it the most value. It is difficult, at the present day, sufficiently to appreciate the importance of partisan exploits of the kind in the critical stage of the war of which we are treating. They cheered the spirit of the people, depressed by overshadowing dangers and severe privations, and kept alive the military spark that was to kindle into the future flame.

CHAPTER SIX

Schuyler on the Point of Resigning—Committee of Inquiry Report in his Favor—His Memorial to Congress proves Satisfactory—Discussions regarding the Northern Department—Gates mistaken as to his Position—He prompts his Friends in Congress—His petulant Letter to Washington—Dignified Reply of the Latter—Position of Gates denied—Schuyler reinstated in Command of the Department—Gates appears on the Floor of Congress—His Proceedings there

THE time was at hand for the committee of inquiry on General Schuyler's conduct to make their report to Congress, and he awaited it with impatience. "I propose in a day or two to resign my commission," writes he to Washington on the 3d of May. "As soon as I have done it, I shall transmit to your Excellency my reasons for such a step."

Washington was grieved at receiving this intimation. He had ever found Schuyler a faithful coadjutor. He knew his peculiar fitness for the Northern department, from his knowledge of the country and its people; his influence among its most important citizens; his experience in treating with the Indians; his fiery energy; his fertility in expedients, and his "sound military sense." But he knew also his sensitive nature, and the peculiar annoyances with which he had to contend. On a former occasion he had prevented him from resigning, by an appeal to his patriotism; he no longer felt justified in interfering. "I am sorry," writes he, "that circumstances are such as to dispose you to a resignation; but you are the best judge of the line of conduct most recon-

cilable to your duty, both in a public and personal view; and your own feelings must determine you in a matter of so delicate and interesting a nature." *

Affairs, however, were taking a more favorable turn. The committee of inquiry made a report which placed the character of Schuyler higher than ever as an able and active commander, and a zealous and disinterested patriot.

He made a memorial to Congress explaining away, or apologizing for, the expressions in his letter of the 4th of February, which had given offense to the House. His memorial was satisfactory; and he was officially informed that Congress now "entertained the same favorable sentiments concerning him that they had entertained before that letter was received."

There were warm discussions in the House on the subject of the Northern department. Several of the most important of the New York delegates observed that General Gates misapprehended his position. He considered himself as holding the same command as that formerly held by General Schuyler. Such was not the intention of Congress in sending him to take command of the army at Ticonderoga. There had been a question between sending him to *that post*, or giving him the adjutancy-general, and it had been decided for the former.

It would be nonsense, they observed, to give him command of the Northern department, and confine him to Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, where he could not have an extensive idea of the defense of the frontier of the Eastern States; but only of one spot, to which the enemy were not obliged to confine their operations, and, as it were, to knock

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* Schuyler's Letter Book.

their heads against a single rock. The affairs of the northeast, it was added, and of the State of New York in particular, were in a critical condition. Much disaffection prevailed, and great clashing of interests. There was but one man capable of keeping all united against the common enemy, and he stood on the books as commander-in-chief of the Middle, or, as it was sometimes called, the Northern department. His presence was absolutely necessary in his home quarters for their immediate succor, but if he returned, he would be a general without an army or military chest; and why was he thus disgraced?

The friends of Gates, on the other hand, who were chiefly delegates from New England, pronounced it an absurdity that an officer holding such an important post as Ticonderoga should be under the absolute orders of another one hundred miles distant, engaged in treaties with Indians and busied in the duties of a provedore. The establishment of commands in departments was entirely wrong; there should be a commander-in-chief, and commanders of the different armies.

We gather these scanty particulars from a letter addressed to Gates by Mr. Lovell. The latter expresses himself with a proper spirit. "I wish," writes he, "some course could be taken which would suit you both. It is plain all the Northern army cannot be intended for the single garrison of Ticonderoga. Who then has the distribution of the members? This must depend on one opinion, or there can be no decision in the defense of the Northern frontiers. It is an unhappy circumstance that such is the altercation at the opening of the campaign."

This letter produced an anxious reply: "Why," writes Gates, "when the argument in support of General Schuyler's command was imposed upon Congress, did not you or somebody say, 'the second post upon this continent next cam-

paign will be at or near Peekskill. There General Schuyler ought to go and command; that will be the curb in the mouth of the New York tories, and the enemy's army. He will then be near the Convention, and in the center of the colony, have a military chest, and all the insignia of office.' This command in honor could not be refused, without owning there is something more alluring than command to General Schuyler, by fixing him at Albanv. By urging this matter home you would have proved the man. He would have resigned all command, have accepted the government of New York, and been fixed to a station where he must do good, and which could not interfere with, or prevent any arrangement Congress have made, or may hereafter make. Unhappy State! That has but one man in it who can fix the wavering minds of its inhabitants to the side of freedom! How could you sit patiently, and, uncontradicted, suffer such impertinence to be crammed down your throats?"

"Why is it nonsense," pursues Gates, "to station the commanding general in the Northern department at Ticonderoga? Was it not the uniform practice of the royal army all last war? Nothing is more certain than that the enemy must first possess that single rock before they can penetrate the country. . . . It is foolish in the extreme to believe the enemy this year can form any attack from the northward but by Ticonderoga. Where, then, ought the commanding general to be posted? Certainly at Ticonderoga. If General Schuyler is solely to possess all the power, all the intelligence, and that particular favorite, the military chest, and constantly reside at Albany, I cannot, with any peace of mind, serve at Ticonderoga." *

* Letter to James Lovell, of Massachusetts. Gates's Papers, N. Y. Hist. Library.

This letter was dispatched by private hand to Philadelphia.

While Gates was in this mood, his aid-de-camp, Major Troup, reported an unsuccessful application to the commander-in-chief for tents. In the petulance of the moment, Gates addressed the following letter to Washington: "Major Troup, upon being disappointed in procuring tents at Fishkill, acquaints me that he went to headquarters to implore your Excellency's aid in that particular for the Northern army. He says your Excellency told him you should want every tent upon the continent for the armies to the southward, and that you did not see any occasion the Northern army could have for tents, for, being a fixed post, they might hut. Refusing this army what you have not in your power to bestow is one thing," adds Gates, "but saying that this army has not the same necessities as the Southern armies is another. I can assure your Excellency the service of the northward requires tents as much as any service I ever saw." *

However indignant Washington may have felt at the disrespectful tone of this letter, and the unwarrantable imputation of sectional partiality contained in it, he contented himself with a grave and measured rebuke. "Can you suppose," writes he, "if there had been an ample supply of tents for the whole army, that I should have hesitated one moment in complying with your demand? I told Major Troup that on account of our loss at Danbury there would be a scarcity of tents; that our army would be a moving one, and that consequently nothing but tents would serve our turn; and that, therefore, as there would be the greatest probability of your being stationary, you should endeavor to cover your troops

* Gates's Papers.

with barracks and huts. Certainly this was not a refusal of tents, but a request that you should, in our contracted situation, make every shift to do without them, or at least with as few as possible.

"The Northern army is, and ever has been, as much the object of my care and attention as the one immediately under my command. . . . I will make particular inquiry of the quartermaster-general, concerning his prospect and expectations as to the article of tents; and if, as I said before, there appears a sufficiency for the whole army, you shall most willingly have your share. But if there is not, surely that army whose movement is uncertain must give up its claims for the present to that which must inevitably take the field the moment the weather will admit, and must continue in it the whole campaign." *

Notwithstanding this reply, Gates insisted in imputing sectional partiality to the commander-in-chief, and sought to impart the same idea to Congress. "Either I am exceedingly dull or unreasonably jealous," writes he to his correspondent, Mr. Lovell, "if I do not discover, by the style and tenor of the letters from Morristown, how little I have to expect from thence. Generals are so far like parsons, they are all for christening their own child first; but let an impartial moderating power decide between us, and do not suffer Southern prejudices to weigh heavier in the balance than the Northern." † A letter from Mr. Lovell, dated the 23d of May, put an end to the suspense of the general with respect to his position. "Misconceptions of past resolves and consequent jealousies," writes he, "have produced a defini-

* Washington's Writings. Sparks, iv. 427.
† Gates's Papers, N. Y. Hist. Lib.

tion of the Northern department, and General Schuyler is ordered to take command of it. The resolve, also, which was thought to *fix* headquarters at Albany is repealed."

Such a resolve had actually been passed on the 22d, and Albany, Ticonderoga, Fort Stanwix, and their dependencies, were thenceforward to be considered as forming the Northern department. The envoy of Gates, bearing the letter in which he had carved out a command for Schuyler at Peekskill, arrived at Philadelphia too late. The general was already provided for.

Schuyler was received with open arms at Albany, on the 3d of June. "I had the satisfaction," writes he, "to experience the finest feelings which my country expressed on my arrival and reappointment. The day after my arrival, the whole county committee did me the honor in form to congratulate me."

Gates was still in Albany, delaying to proceed with General Fermois to Ticonderoga until the garrison should be sufficiently strengthened. Although the resolve of Congress did but define his position, which had been misunderstood, he persisted in considering himself degraded; declined serving under General Schuyler, who would have given him the post at Ticonderoga in his absence; and obtaining permission to leave the department, set out on the 9th for Philadelphia to demand redress of Congress.

General St. Clair was sent to take command of the troops at Ticonderoga, accompanied by General de Fermois. As the whole force in the Northern department would not be sufficient to command the extensive works there on both sides of the lake, St. Clair was instructed to bestow his first attention in fortifying Mount Independence, on the east side, Schuyler considering it much the most defensible, and that

it might be made capable of sustaining a long and vigorous siege.

"I am fully convinced," writes he, "that between two and three thousand men can effectually maintain Mount Independence and secure the pass."

It would be imprudent, he thought, to station the greater part of the forces at Fort Ticonderoga; as, should the enemy be able to invest it, and cut off the communication with the country on the east side, it might experience a disaster similar to that at Fort Washington.

The orders of Schuyler to officers commanding posts in the department are characterized by his Dutch attention to cleanliness as to the quarters of the soldiers, their bedding, clothing, and equipments.

All officers mounting guard were to have their hair dressed and powdered. The adjutants of the several corps were to be particularly careful that none of the non-commissioned officers and soldiers mount guard without having their hair dressed and powdered, their persons perfectly clean, and their arms and accouterments in the most complete order.

While Schuyler was thus providing for the security of Ticonderoga, and enforcing cleanliness in his department, Gates was wending his way to Philadelphia, his bosom swelling with imaginary wrongs. He arrived there on the 18th. The next day at noon, Mr. Roger Sherman, an Eastern delegate, informed Congress that General Gates was waiting at the door, and wished admittance.

"For what purpose?" it was asked.

"To communicate intelligence of importance," replied Mr. Sherman.

Gates was accordingly ushered in, took his seat in an elbow chair, and proceeded to give some news concerning the

Indians; their friendly dispositions, their delight at seeing French officers in the American service, and other matters of the kind; then drawing forth some papers from his pocket, he opened upon the real object of his visit; stating from his notes, in a flurried and disjointed manner, the easy and happy life he had left to take up arms for the liberties of America; and how strenuously he had exerted himself in its defense; how that some time in March he had been appointed to a command in the Northern department; but that a few days ago, without having given any cause of offense, without accusation, without trial, without hearing, without notice, he had received a resolution by which he was, in a most disgraceful manner, superseded in his command. Here his irritated feelings got the better of his judgment, and he indulged in angry reproaches of Congress, and recitals of a conversation which had taken place between him and Mr. Duane, a member of the House, whom he considered his enemy. Here Mr. Duane rose, and addressing himself to the president, hoped the general would observe order, and cease any personal observations, as he could not, in Congress, enter into any controversy with him upon the subject of former conversations.

Other of the members took fire; the conduct of the general was pronounced disrespectful to the House and unworthy of himself, and it was moved and seconded that he be requested to withdraw. Some of the Eastern delegates opposed the motion, and endeavored to palliate his conduct. A wordy clamor ensued, during which the general stood, his papers in his hand, endeavoring several times to be heard; but the clamor increasing, he withdrew with the utmost indignation. It was then determined that he should not again be admitted on the floor; but should be informed that Con-

gress were ready and willing to hear, by way of memorial, any grievances of which he might have to complain.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Highland Passes of the Hudson—George Clinton in Command of the Forts—His Measures for Defense—Generals Greene and Knox examine the State of the Forts—Their Report—The general Command of the Hudson offered to Arnold—Declined by him—Given to Putnam—Appointment of Dr. Craik to the Medical Department—Expedition planned against Fort Independence—But relinquished—Washington shifts his Camp to Middlebrook—State of his Army—General Howe crosses into the Jerseys—Position of the two Armies at Middlebrook and behind the Raritan—Correspondence between Washington and Colonel Reed

The Highland passes of the Hudson, always objects of anxious thought to Washington, were especially so at this juncture. General McDougall still commanded at Peekskill, and General George Clinton, who resided at New Windsor, had command of the Highland forts. The latter, at the earnest request of the New York Convention, had received from Congress the command of brigadier-general in the Continental army. "My precarious state of health and want of military knowledge," writes he, "would have rather induced me to have led a more retired life than that of the army, had I been consulted on the occasion; but as, early in the present contest, I laid it down as a maxim not to refuse my best, though poor services, to my country in any way they should think proper to employ me, I cannot refuse the honor done me in the present employment." †

* Letter of the Hon. Wm. Duer. Schuyler's Papers.
† Clinton to Washington.

He was perfectly sincere in what he said. George Clinton was one of the soldiers of the Revolution who served from a sense of duty, not from military inclination or a thirst for glory. A long career of public service in various capacities illustrated his modest worth and devoted patriotism.

When the "unhappy affair of Peekskill" had alarmed the Convention of New York for the safety of the forts on the Highlands, Clinton, authorized by that body, had ordered out part of the militia of Orange, Dutchess, and Westchester counties, without waiting for Washington's approbation of the measure. He had strengthened, also, with anchors and cables, the chain drawn across the river at Fort Montgomery. "Had the Convention suffered me to have paid my whole attention to this business," writes he to Washington (18th April), "it would have been nearly completed by this time."

A few days later came word that several transports were anchored at Dobb's Ferry in the Tappan Sea. It might be intended to divert attention from a movement toward the Delaware; or to make incursions into the country back of Morristown, seize on the passes through the mountains, and cut off the communication between the army and the Hudson. To frustrate such a design, Washington ordered Clinton to post as good a number of troops from his garrison as he could spare, on the mountains west of the river.

In the month of May, he writes to General McDougall: "The imperfect state of the fortifications of Fort Montgomery gives me great uneasiness, because I think, from a concurrence of circumstances, that it begins to look as if the enemy intended to turn their view toward the North River instead of the Delaware. I therefore desire that General George Clinton, and yourself, will fall upon every measure

to put the fortifications in such a state that theymay at least resist a sudden attack, and keep the enemy employed till reenforcements may arrive. If the North River is their object, they cannot accomplish it unless they withdraw their forces from the Jerseys, and that they cannot do unknown to us."

On the 12th of May, General Greene received instructions from Washington to proceed to the Highlands, and examine the state and condition of the forts, especially Fort Montgomery; the probability of an attack by water, the practicability of an approach by land; where and how this could be effected, and the eminences whence the forts could be annoyed. This done, and the opinions of the general officers present having been consulted, he was to give such orders and make such disposition of the troops as might appear necessary for the greater security of the passes by land and water. When reconnoitering the Highlands in the preceding year, Washington had remarked a wild and rugged pass on the western side of the Hudson round Bull Hill, a rocky, forest-clad mountain, forming an advance rampart at the entrance to Peekskill Bay. "This pass," he observed, "should also be attended to, *lest the enemy by a coup de main should possess themselves of it before a sufficient force could be assembled to oppose them.*" Subsequent events will illustrate, though unfortunately, the sagacity and foresight of this particular instruction.

General Knox was associated with General Greene in this visit of inspection. They examined the river and the passes of the Highlands in company with Generals McDougall, George Clinton, and Anthony Wayne. The latter, recently promoted to the rank of brigadier, had just returned from Ticonderoga. The five generals made a joint

report to Washington, in which they recommended the completion of the obstructions in the river already commenced. These consisted of a boom, or heavy iron chain, across the river from Fort Montgomery to Anthony's Nose, with cables stretched in front to break the force of any ship under way, before she should strike it. The boom was to be protected by the guns of two ships and two row galleys stationed just above it, and by batteries on shore. This, it was deemed, would be sufficient to prevent the enemy's ships from ascending the river. If these obstructions could be rendered effective, they did not think the enemy would attempt to operate by land; "the passes through the Highlands being so exceedingly difficult."

The general command of the Hudson, from the number of troops to be assembled there, and the variety of points to be guarded, was one of the most important in the service, and required an officer of consummate energy, activity, and judgment. It was a major-general's command, and as such was offered by Washington to Arnold; intending thus publicly to manifest his opinion of his deserts, and hoping, by giving him so important a post, to appease his irritated feelings.

Arnold, however, declined to accept it. In an interview with Washington at Morristown, he alleged his anxiety to proceed to Philadelphia and settle his public accounts, which were of considerable amount; especially as reports had been circulated injurious to his character as a man of integrity. He intended, therefore, to wait on Congress, and request a committee of inquiry into his conduct. Besides, he did not consider the promotion conferred on him by Congress sufficient to obviate their previous neglect, as it did not give him the rank he had a claim to, from seniority in the line of

brigadiers. In their last resolve respecting him, they had acknowledged him competent to the station of major-general, and, therefore, had done away every objection implied by their former omission. With these considerations, he proceeded to Philadelphia, bearing a letter from Washington to the President of Congress, countenancing his complaints, and testifying to the excellence of his military character. We may here add that the accusations against him were pronounced false and slanderous by the Board of War; and the report of the board was confirmed by Congress, but that Arnold was still left aggrieved and unredressed in point of rank.

The important command of the Hudson, being declined by Arnold, was now given to Putnam, who repaired forthwith to Peekskill. General McDougall was requested by Washington to aid the veteran in gaining a knowledge of the post. "You are well acquainted," writes he, "with the old gentleman's temper; he is active, disinterested, and open to conviction."

Putnam set about promptly to carry into effect the measures of security which Greene and Knox had recommended; especially the boom and chain at Fort Montgomery, about which General George Clinton had busied himself. Putnam had a peculiar fancy for river obstructions of the kind. A large part of the New York and New England troops were stationed at this post, not merely to guard the Hudson, but to render aid either to the Eastern or Middle States in case of exigency.

About this time, Washington had the satisfaction of drawing near to him his old friend and traveling companion, Dr. James Craik, the same who had served with him in Braddock's campaign, and had voyaged with him down the

Ohio; for whom he now procured the appointment of assistant director-general of the Hospital department of the middle district, which included the States between the Hudson and the Potomac. In offering the situation to the doctor, he writes, "You know how far you may be benefited or injured by such an appointment, and whether it is advisable or practicable for you to quit your family and practice at this time. I request, as a friend, that my proposing this matter to you may have no influence upon your acceptance of it. I have no other end in view than to serve you." Dr. Craik, it will be found, remained his attached and devoted friend through life.

It had been Washington's earnest wish, in the early part of the spring, to take advantage of the inactivity of the enemy and attempt some "capital stroke" for the benefit of the next campaign; but the want of troops prevented him. He now planned a night expedition for Putnam, exactly suited to the humor of the old general. He was to descend the Hudson in boats, surprise Fort Independence at Spyt den Duivel Creek, capture the garrison, and sweep the road between that post and the Highlands. Putnam was all on fire for the enterprise, when movements on the part of the enemy, seemingly indicative of a design upon Philadelphia, obliged Washington to abandon the project, and exert all his vigilance in watching the hostile operations in the Jerseys.

Accordingly, toward the end of May, he broke up his cantonments at Morristown, and shifted his camp to Middlebrook, within ten miles of Brunswick. His whole force fit for duty was now about seven thousand three hundred men, all from the States south of the Hudson. There were forty-three regiments, forming ten brigades, commanded by Brigadiers Muhlenberg, Weedon, Woodford, Scott, Smallwood,

Deborre, Wayne, Dehaas, Conway, and Maxwell. These were apportioned into five divisions of two brigades each, under Major-generals Greene, Stephen, Sullivan, Lincoln, and Stirling. The artillery was commanded by Knox. Sullivan, with his division, was stationed on the right at Princeton. With the rest of his force, Washington fortified himself in a position naturally strong, among hills, in the rear of the village of Middlebrook. His camp was, on all sides, difficult of approach, and he rendered it still more so by intrenchments. The high grounds about it commanded a wide view of the country around Brunswick, the road to Philadelphia, and the course of the Raritan, so that the enemy could make no important movement on land, without his perceiving it.

It was now the beautiful season of the year, and the troops from their height beheld a fertile and well-cultivated country spread before them, "painted with meadows, green fields, and orchards, studded with villages, and affording abundant supplies and forage." A part of their duty was to guard it from the ravage of the enemy, while they held themselves ready to counteract his movements in every direction.

On the 31st of May, reports were brought to camp that a fleet of a hundred sail had left New York, and stood out to sea. Whither bound, and how freighted, was unknown. If they carried troops, their destination might be Delaware Bay. Eighteen transports, also, had arrived at New York, with troops in foreign uniforms. Were they those which had been in Canada, or others immediately from Germany? Those who had reconnoitered them with glasses could not tell. All was matter of anxious conjecture.

Lest the fleet which had put to sea should be bound

further south than Delaware Bay, Washington instantly wrote to Patrick Henry, at that time Governor of Virginia, putting him on his guard. "Should this fleet arrive on your coast, and the enemy penetrate the country, or make incursions, I would recommend that the earliest opposition be made by parties and detachments of militia, without waiting to collect a large body. I am convinced that this would be attended with the most salutary consequences, and that greater advantages would be derived from it than by deferring the opposition till you assemble a number equal to that of the enemy."

The troops in foreign uniforms which had landed from the transports proved to be Anspachers, and other German mercenaries; there were British re-enforcements also; and, what was particularly needed, a supply of tents and camp equipage. Sir William Howe had been waiting for the latter, and likewise until the ground should be covered with grass.*

The country was now in full verdure, affording "green forage" in abundance, and all things seemed to Sir William propitious for the opening of the campaign. Early in June, therefore, he gave up ease and gayety, and luxurious life at New York, and, crossing into the Jerseys, set up his headquarters at Brunswick.

As soon as Washington ascertained that Sir William's attention was completely turned to this quarter, he determined to strengthen his position with all the force that could be spared from other parts, so as to be able, in case a favorable opportunity presented, to make an attack upon the enemy;

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* Evidence of Major-general Grey before the House of Commons.

in the meantime, he would harass them with his light militia troops, aided by a few Continentals, so as to weaken their numbers by continual skirmishes. With this view, he ordered General Putnam to send down most of the Continental troops from Peekskill, leaving only a number sufficient, in conjunction with the militia, to guard that post against surprise. They were to proceed in three divisions under Generals Parsons, McDougall, and Glover, at one day's march distant from each other.

Arnold, in this critical juncture, had been put in command of Philadelphia, a post which he had been induced to accept, although the question of rank had not been adjusted to his satisfaction. His command embraced the western bank of the Delaware, with all its fords and passes, and he took up his station there with a strong body of militia, supported by a few Continentals, to oppose any attempt of the enemy to cross the river. He was instructed by Washington to give him notice by expresses, posted on the road, if any fleet should appear in Delaware Bay; and to endeavor to concert signals with the camp of Sullivan at Princeton, by alarm fires upon the hills.

On the night of the 13th of June, General Howe sallied forth in great force from Brunswick, as if pushing directly for the Delaware; but his advanced guard halted at Somerset court-house, about eight or nine miles distant. Apprised of this movement, Washington at daybreak reconnoitered the enemy from the heights before the camp. He observed their front halting at the court-house, but a few miles distant, while troops and artillery were grouped here and there along the road, and the rearguard was still at Brunswick. It was a question with Washington and his generals, as they reconnoitered the enemy with their glasses, whether this was

a real move toward Philadelphia, or merely a lure to tempt them down from their strong position. In this uncertainty, Washington drew out his army in battle array along the heights, but kept quiet. In the present state of his forces it was his plan not to risk a general action; but, should the enemy really march toward the Delaware, to hang heavily upon their rear. Their principal difficulty would be in crossing that river, and there, he trusted, they would meet with spirited opposition from the Continental troops and militia, stationed on the western side under Arnold and Mifflin.

The British took up a strong position, having Millstone Creek on their left, the Raritan all along their front, and their right resting on Brunswick, and proceeded to fortify themselves with bastions.

While thus anxiously situated, Washington, on the 14th, received a letter from Colonel Reed, his former secretary and confidential friend. A coolness had existed on the general's part, ever since he had unwarily opened the satirical letter of General Lee; yet he had acted toward Reed with his habitual high-mindedness, and had recently nominated him as general of cavalry. The latter had deeply deplored the interruption of their once unreserved intercourse; he had long, he said, desired to have one hour of private conversation with Washington on the subject of Lee's letter, but had deferred it in the hope of obtaining his own letter to which that was an answer. In that he had been disappointed by Lee's captivity. On the present occasion, Reed's heart was full, and he refers to former times in language that is really touching:

"I am sensible, my dear sir," writes he, "how difficult it is to regain lost friendship; but the consciousness of never having justly forfeited yours, and the hope that it may be

in my power fully to convince you of it, are some consolation for an event which I never think of but with the greatest concern. In the meantime, my dear general, let me entreat you to judge of me by realities, not by appearances; and believe that I never entertained or expressed a sentiment incompatible with that regard I professed for your person and character, and which, whether I shall be so happy as to possess your future good opinion or not, I shall carry to my grave with me.

"A late perusal of the letters you honored me with at Cambridge and New York, last year, afforded me a melancholy pleasure. I cannot help acknowledging myself deeply affected in a comparison with those which I have since received. I should not, my dear sir, have trespassed on your time and patience at this juncture so long, but that a former letter upon this subject I fear has miscarried; and whatever may be my future destination and course of life, I could not support the reflection of being thought ungrateful and insincere to a friendship which was equally my pride and my pleasure. May God Almighty crown your virtue, my dear and much respected general, with deserved success, and make your life as happy and honorable to yourself as it has been useful to your country."

The heart of Washington was moved by this appeal, and though in the midst of military preparations, with a hostile army at hand, he detained Colonel Reed's messenger long enough to write a short letter in reply: "To thank you," said he, "as I do most sincerely, for the friendly and affectionate sentiments contained in yours toward me, and to assure you that I am perfectly convinced of the sincerity of them.

"True it is, I felt myself hurt by a certain letter, which

appeared at that time to be the echo of one from you; I was hurt—not because I thought my judgment wronged by the expressions contained in it, but because the same sentiments were not communicated immediately to myself. The favorable manner in which your opinions, upon all occasions, had been received, the impressions they made, and the unreserved manner in which I wished and required them to be given, entitled me, I thought, to your advice upon any point in which I appeared to be wanting. To meet with anything, then, that carried with it a complexion of withholding that advice from me, and censuring my conduct to another, was such an argument of disingenuity that I was not a little mortified at it. However, I am perfectly satisfied that matters were not as they appeared from the letter alluded to."

Washington was not of a distrustful spirit. From this moment we are told that all estrangement disappeared, and the ancient relations of friendly confidence between him and Colonel Reed were restored.* His whole conduct throughout the affair bears evidence of his candor and magnanimity.

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* Life of Reed, by his grandson.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Feigned Movements of Sir William Howe—Baffling Caution of Washington—Rumored Inroads from the North—Schuyler applies for Re-enforcements—Renewed Schemes of Howe to draw Washington from his Stronghold—Skirmish between Cornwallis and Lord Stirling—The Enemy evacuate the Jerseys—Perplexity as to their next Movement—A Hostile Fleet on Lake Champlain—Burgoyne approaching Ticonderoga—Speculations of Washington—His Purpose of keeping Sir William Howe from ascending the Hudson—Orders George Clinton to call out Militia from Ulster and Orange Counties—Sends Sullivan toward the Highlands—Moves his own Camp back to Morristown—Stir among the Shipping—Their Destination surmised to be Philadelphia—A Dinner at Headquarters—Alexander Hamilton—Graydon's Rueful Description of the Army—His Character of Wayne

THE American and British armies, strongly posted, as we have shown, the former along the heights of Middlebrook, the other beyond the Raritan, remained four days grimly regarding each other; both waiting to be attacked. The Jersey militia, which now turned out with alacrity, repaired some to Washington's camp, others to that of Sullivan. The latter had fallen back from Princeton and taken a position behind the Sourland Hills.

Howe pushed out detachments and made several feints, as if to pass by the American camp and march to the Delaware; but Washington was not to be deceived. "The enemy will not move that way," said he, "until they have given this army a severe blow. The risk would be too great to attempt to cross a river where they must expect to meet a formidable oppositon in front, and would have such a force as

ours in their rear." He kept on the heights, therefore, and strengthened his intrenchments.

Baffled in these attempts to draw his cautious adversary into a general action, Howe, on the 19th, suddenly broke up his camp, and pretended to return with some precipitation to Brunswick, burning as he went several valuable dwelling-houses. Washington's light troops hovered round the enemy as far as the Raritan and Millstone, which secured their flanks, would permit; but the main army kept to its strong-hold on the heights.

On the next day came warlike news from the North. Amesbury, a British spy, had been seized and examined by Schuyler. Burgoyne was stated as being arrived at Quebec to command the forces in an invasion from Canada. While he advanced with his vain force by Lake Champlain, a detachment of British troops, Canadians, and Indians, led by Sir John Johnson, was to penetrate by Oswego to the Mohawk River, and place itself between Fort Stanwix and Fort Edward.

If this information was correct, Ticonderoga would soon be attacked. The force there might be sufficient for its defense, but Schuyler would have no troops to oppose the inroad of Sir John Johnson, and he urged a re-enforcement. Washington forthwith sent orders to Putnam to procure sloops, and hold four Massachusetts regiments in readiness to go up the river at a moment's warning. Still, if the information of the spy was correct, he doubted the ability of the enemy to carry the reported plan into effect. It did not appear that Burgoyne had brought any re-enforcements from Europe. If so, he could not move with a greater force than five thousand men. The garrison at Ticonderoga was sufficiently strong, according to former accounts, to hold it

against an attack. Burgoyne certainly would never leave it in his rear, and if he invested it, he would not have a sufficient number left to send one body to Oswego and another to cut off the communications between Fort Edward and Fort George. Such was Washington's reasoning in reply to Schuyler. In the meantime, he retained his mind unflurried by these new rumors; keeping from his heights a vigilant eye upon General Howe.

On the 22d, Sir William again marched out of Brunswick, but this time proceeded toward Amboy, again burning several houses on the way; hoping, perhaps, that the sight of columns of smoke rising from a ravaged country would irritate the Americans and provoke an attack. Washington sent out three brigades under General Greene to fall upon the rear of the enemy, while Morgan hung upon their skirts with his riflemen. At the same time the army remained paraded on the heights, ready to yield support, if necessary.

Finding that Howe had actually sent his heavy baggage and part of his troops over to Staten Island by a bridge of boats which he had thrown across, Washington, on the 24th, left the heights and descended to Quibbletown (now New Market), six or seven miles on the road to Amboy, to be nearer at hand for the protection of his advanced parties; while Lord Stirling with his division and some light troops was at Matouchin church, closer to the enemy's lines, to watch their motions, and be ready to harass them while crossing to the island.

General Howe now thought he had gained his point. Recalling those who had crossed, he formed his troops into two columns, the right led by Cornwallis, the left by himself, and marched back rapidly by different routes from Amboy. He had three objects in view: to cut off the principal

advanced parties of the Americans; to come up with and bring the main body into an engagement near Quibbletown; or that Lord Cornwallis, making a considerable circuit to the right, should turn the left of Washington's position, get to the heights, take possession of the passes, and oblige him to abandon that stronghold where he had hitherto been so secure.* Washington, however, had timely notice of his movements, and, penetrating his design, regained his fortified camp at Middlebrook, and secured the passes of the mountains. He then detached a body of light troops under Brigadier-general Scott, together with Morgan's riflemen, to hang on the flank of the enemy and watch their motions.

Cornwallis, in his circuitous march, dispersed the light parties of the advance, but fell in with Lord Stirling's division, strongly posted in a woody country, and well covered by artillery judiciously disposed. A sharp skirmish ensued, when the Americans gave way and retreated to the hills, with the loss of a few men and three field-pieces; while the British halted at Westfield, disappointed in the main objects of their enterprise. They remained at Westfield until the afternoon of the 27th, when they moved toward Spanktown (now Rahway), plundering all before them, and, it is said, burning several houses; but pursued and harassed the whole way by the American light troops.†

Perceiving that every scheme of bringing the Americans to a general action, or at least of withdrawing them from their strongholds, was rendered abortive by the caution and prudence of Washington, and aware of the madness of attempting to march to the Delaware, through a hostile coun-

* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 247.
† Letter to the President of Congress, 28th June, 1777.

try, with such a force in his rear, Sir William Howe broke up his headquarters at Amboy on the last of June, and crossed over to Staten Island on the floating bridge; his troops that were encamped opposite to Amboy struck their tents on the following day and marched off to the old camping ground on the Bay of New York; the ships got under way, and moved down round the island; and it was soon apparent that, at length, the enemy had really evacuated the Jerseys.

The question now was, what would be their next move? A great stir among the shipping seemed to indicate an expedition by water. But whither? Circumstances occurred to perplex the question.

Scarce had the last tent been struck, and the last transport disappeared from before Amboy, when intelligence arrived from General St. Clair announcing the appearance of a hostile fleet on Lake Champlain, and that General Burgoyne with the whole Canada army was approaching Ticonderoga. The judgment and circumspection of Washington were never more severely put to the proof. Was this merely a diversion with a small force of light troops and Indians, intending to occupy the attention of the American forces in that quarter, while the main body of the army in Canada should come round by sea, and form a junction with the army under Howe? But General Burgoyne, in Washington's opinion, was a man of too much spirit and enterprise to return from England merely to execute a plan from which no honor was to be derived. Did he really intend to break through by way of Ticonderoga? In that case it must be Howe's plan to co-operate with him. Had all the recent maneuvers of the enemy in the Jerseys, which had appeared so enigmatical to Washington, been merely a stratagem to

amuse him until they should receive intelligence of the movements of Burgoyne? If so, Sir William must soon throw off the mask. His next move, in such case, would be to ascend the Hudson, seize on the Highland passes before Washington could form a union with the troops stationed there, and thus open the way for the junction with Burgoyne. Should Washington, however, on such a presumption, hasten with his troops to Peekskill, leaving General Howe on Staten Island, what would prevent the latter from pushing to Philadelphia by South Amboy, or any other route?

Such were the perplexities and difficulties presenting themselves under every aspect of the case, and discussed by Washington in his correspondence with his accustomed clearness. In this dilemma he sent Generals Parsons and Varnum with a couple of brigades in all haste to Peekskill; and wrote to Generals George Clinton and Putnam; the former to call out the New York militia from Orange and Ulster counties; the latter to summon the militia from Connecticut; and as soon as such re-enforcements should be at hand, to dispatch four of the strongest Massachusetts regiments to the aid of Ticonderoga; at the same time the expediency was suggested to General Schuyler of having all the cattle and vehicles removed from such parts of the country which he might think the enemy intended to penetrate.

General Sullivan, moreover, was ordered to advance with his division toward the Highlands, as far as Pompton, while Washington moved his own camp back to Morristown, to be ready either to push on to the Highlands, or fall back upon his recent position at Middlebrook, according to the movements of the enemy. "If I can keep General Howe below the Highlands," said he, "I think their schemes will be entirely baffled."

Deserters from Staten Island and New York soon brought word to the camp that transports were being fitted up with berths for horses, and taking in three weeks' supply of water and provender. All this indicated some other destination than that of the Hudson. Lest an attempt on the Eastern States should be intended, Washington sent a circular to their governors to put them on their guard.

In the midst of his various cares, his yeoman soldiery, the Jersey militia, were not forgotten. It was their harvest time; and, the State being evacuated, there was no immediate call for their services; he dismissed, therefore, almost the whole of them to their homes.

Captain Graydon, whose memoirs we have heretofore had occasion to quote, paid a visit to the camp at this juncture, in company with Colonel Miles and Major West, all American prisoners on Long Island, but who had been liberated on parole. Graydon remarks that, to their great surprise, they saw no military parade upon their journey, nor any indication of martial vigor on the part of the country. Here and there a militia man with his contrasted colored cape and facings; doubtless some one who had received his furlough, and was bound home to his farm. Captains, majors, and colonels abounded in the land, but were not to be found at the head of their men.

When he arrived at the camp, he could see nothing which deserved the name of army. "I was told, indeed," remarks he, "that it was much weakened by detachments, and I was glad to find there was some cause for the present paucity of soldiers. I could not doubt, however, that things were going on well. The commander-in-chief and all about him were in excellent spirits." The three officers waited on Washington at his marquee in the evening. In the course

of conversation, he asked them what they conceived to be the objects of General Howe. Colonel Miles replied, a co-operation with the Northern army, by means of the Hudson. Washington acknowledged that indications and probabilities tended to that conclusion; nevertheless, he had little doubt the object of Howe was Philadelphia.

Graydon and his companions dined the next day at head-quarters; there was a large party, in which were several ladies. Colonel Alexander Hamilton, who, in the preceding month of April, had been received into Washington's family as aid-de-camp, presided at the head of the table, and "acquitted himself," writes Graydon, "with an ease, propriety, and vivacity which gave me the most favorable impression of his talents and accomplishments."

We may here observe that the energy, skill and intelligence displayed by Hamilton throughout the last year's campaign, whenever his limited command gave him opportunity of evincing them, had won his entrance to headquarters; where his quick discernment and precocious judgment were soon fully appreciated. Strangers were surprised to see a youth, scarce twenty years of age, received into the implicit confidence and admitted into the gravest counsels of a man like Washington. While his uncommon talents thus commanded respect, rarely inspired by one of his years, his juvenile appearance and buoyant spirit made him a universal favorite. Harrison, the "old secretary," much his senior, looked upon him with an almost paternal eye, and regarding his diminutive size and towering spirit, used to call him "the little lion"; while Washington would now and then speak of him by the cherishing appellation of "my boy." *

* Communicated to the author by the late Mrs. Hamilton. *Note.*—A veteran officer of the Revolution used to speak in

The following is Graydon's amusing account of Wayne, whom he visited at his quarters. "He entertained the most sovereign contempt for the enemy. In his confident way, he affirmed that the two armies had interchanged their original modes of warfare. That for our parts, we had thrown away the shovel, and the British had taken it up, as they dared not face us without the cover of an intrenchment. I made some allowance for the fervid manner of the general, who, though unquestionably as brave a man as any in the army, was nevertheless somewhat addicted to the vaunting style of Marshal Villars, a man who, like himself, could fight as well as brag."

Graydon speaks of the motley, shabby clothing of the troops. "Even in General Wayne himself there was in this particular a considerable falling off. His quondam regimentals as colonel of the 4th battalion were, I think, blue and white, in which he had been accustomed to appear with exemplary neatness; whereas he was now dressed in character for Macheath or Captain Gibbet, in a dingy red coat, with a black rusty cravat and tarnished hat." Wayne was doubtless still rusty from his campaigning in the North.

Graydon, during his recent captivity, had been accustomed to the sight of British troops in the completeness of martial array, and looked with a rueful eye on patriotism in rags. From all that he saw at the camp, he suspected affairs

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his old days of the occasion on which he first saw Hamilton. It was during the memorable retreat through the Jerseys. "I noticed," said he, "a youth, a mere stripling, small, slender, almost delicate in frame, marching beside a piece of artillery, with a cocked hat pulled down over his eyes, apparently lost in thought, with his hand resting on the cannon, and every now and then patting it as he mused, as if it were a favorite horse or a pet plaything."

were not in a prosperous train, notwithstanding the cheerful countenances at headquarters. There appeared to be a want of animated co-operation both on the part of the government and the people. "General Washington, with the little remnant of his army at Morristown, seemed left to scuffle for liberty, like another Cato at Utica." *

We will now turn to the North, and lift the curtain for a moment, to give the reader a glance at affairs in that quarter about which there were such dubious rumors.

CHAPTER NINE

British Invasion from Canada—The Plan—Composition of the Invading Army—Schuyler on the Alert—His Speculations as to the Enemy's Designs—Burgoyne on Lake Champlain—His War Speech to his Indian Allies—Signs of his Approach descried from Ticonderoga—Correspondence on the Subject between St. Clair, Major Livingston, and Schuyler—Burgoyne intrenches near Ticonderoga—His Proclamation—Schuyler's Exertions at Albany to forward Re-enforcements—Hears that Ticonderoga is Evacuated—Mysterious Disappearance of St. Clair and his Troops—Amazement and Concern of Washington—Orders Re-enforcements to Schuyler at Fort Edward, and to Putnam at Peekskill—Advances with his Main Army to the Clove—His Hopeful Spirit manifested

THE armament advancing against Ticonderoga, of which General St. Clair had given intelligence, was not a mere diversion, but a regular invasion; the plan of which had been devised by the king, Lord George Germaine, and General Burgoyne, the latter having returned to England from Canada in the preceding year. The junction of the two armies—that in Canada and that under General Howe in

* Graydon's Memoirs, p. 282.

New York—was considered the speediest mode of quelling the rebellion; and as the security and good government of Canada required the presence of Governor Sir Guy Carleton, three thousand men were to remain there with him; the residue of the army was to be employed upon two expeditions; the one under General Burgoyne, who was to force his way to Albany, the other under Lieutenant-colonel St. Leger, who was to make a diversion on the Mohawk River.

The invading army was composed of three thousand seven hundred and twenty-four British rank and file, three thousand sixteen Germans, mostly Brunswickers, two hundred and fifty Canadians, and four hundred Indians; besides these there were four hundred and seventy-three artillery men, in all nearly eight thousand men. The army was admirably appointed. Its brass train of artillery was extolled as perhaps the finest ever allotted to an army of the size. General Phillips, who commanded the artillery, had gained great reputation in the wars in Germany. Brigadier-generals Fraser, Powel, and Hamilton, were also officers of distinguished merit. So was Major-general the Baron Riedesel, a Brunswicker, who commanded the German troops.

While Burgoyne with the main force proceeded from St. John's, Colonel St. Leger, with a detachment of regulars and Canadians, about seven hundred strong, was to land at Oswego, and, guided by Sir John Johnson at the head of his loyalist volunteers, tory refugees from his former neighborhood, and a body of Indians, was to enter the Mohawk country, draw the attention of General Schuyler in that direction, attack Fort Stanwix, and, having ravaged the valley of the Mohawk, rejoin Burgoyne at Albany; where it was expected they would make a triumphant junction with the army of Sir William Howe.

General Burgoyne left St. John's on the 16th of June. Some idea may be formed of his buoyant anticipation of a triumphant progress through the country by the manifold and lumbering appurtenances of a European camp with which his army was encumbered. In this respect he had committed the same error in his campaign through a wilderness of lakes and forests that had once embarrassed the unfortunate Braddock in his march across the mountains of Virginia.

Schuyler was uncertain as to the plans and force of the enemy. If information gathered from scouts and a captured spy might be relied on, Ticonderoga would soon be attacked; but he trusted the garrison was sufficient to maintain it. This information he transmitted to Washington from Fort Edward on the 16th, the very day that Burgoyne embarked at St. John's.

On the following day Schuyler was at Ticonderoga. The works were not in such a state of forwardness as he had anticipated, owing to the tardy arrival of troops and the want of a sufficient number of artificers. The works in question related chiefly to Mount Independence, a high circular hill on the east side of the lake, immediately opposite to the old fort, and considered the most defensible. A star fort with pickets crowned the summit of the hill, which was table land; half way down the side of a hill was a battery, and at its foot were strongly intrenched works well mounted with cannon. Here the French general, De Fermois, who had charge of this fort, was posted.

As this part of Lake Champlain is narrow, a connection was kept up between the two forts by a floating bridge, supported on twenty-two sunken piers in caissons, formed of very strong timber. Between the piers were separate floats,

fifty feet long and twelve feet wide, strongly connected by iron chains and rivets. On the north side of the bridge was a boom, composed of large pieces of timber, secured by riveted bolts, and beside this was a double iron chain with links an inch and a half square. The bridge, boom, and chain were four hundred yards in length. This immense work, the labor of months, on which no expense had been spared, was intended, while it afforded a communication between the two forts, to protect the upper part of the lake, presenting, under cover of their guns, a barrier which it was presumed no hostile ship would be able to break through.

Having noted the state of affairs and the wants of the garrison, Schuyler hastened to Fort George, whence he sent on provisions for upward of sixty days; and from the banks of the Hudson additional carpenters and working cattle. "Business will now go on in better train, and I hope with much more spirit," writes he to Congress; "and I trust we shall still be able to put everything in such order as to give the enemy a good reception, and, I hope, a repulse, should they attempt a real attack, which I conjecture will not be soon, if at all; although I expect they will approach with their fleet to keep us in alarm, and to draw our attention from other quarters where they may mean a real attack."

His idea was that, while their fleet and a small body of troops might appear before Ticonderoga, and keep up continual alarms, the main army might march from St. Francois or St. John's toward the Connecticut River, and make an attempt on the Eastern States. "A maneuver of this kind," observes he, "would be in General Burgoyne's way, and, if successful, would be attended with much honor to him. . . . I am the more confirmed in this conjecture, as the enemy cannot be ignorant how very difficult, if not im-

possible, it will be for them to penetrate to Albany, unless in losing Ticonderoga we should lose not only all our cannon, but most of the army designed for this department."

In the meantime, Burgoyne, with his amphibious and semi-barbarous armament, was advancing up the lake. On the 21st of June he encamped at the river Boquet, several miles north of Crown Point; here he gave a war feast to his savage allies, and made them a speech in that pompous and half poetical vein in which it is the absurd practice to address our savages, and which is commonly reduced to flat prose by their interpreters. At the same time he was strenuous in enjoining humanity toward prisoners, dwelling on the difference between ordinary wars carried on against a common enemy, and this against a country in rebellion, where the hostile parties were of the same blood, and loyal subjects of the crown might be confounded with the rebellious. It was a speech intended to excite their ardor, but restrain their cruelty; a difficult medium to attain with Indian warriors.

The garrison at Ticonderoga meanwhile were anxiously on the lookout. Their fortress, built on a hill, commanded an extensive prospect over the bright and beautiful lake and its surrounding forests, but there were long points and promontories at a distance to intercept the view.

By the 24th, scouts began to bring in word of the approaching foe. Bark canoes had been seen filled with white men and savages. Then three vessels under sail, and one at anchor, above Split Rock, and behind it the radeau "Thunderer," noted in last year's naval fight. Anon came word of encampments sufficient for a large body of troops, on both sides of Gilliland's Creek, with bateaux plying about its waters, and painted warriors gliding about in

canoes; while a number of smokes rising out of the forest at a distance beyond gave signs of an Indian camp.

St. Clair wrote word of all this to Schuyler, and that it was supposed the enemy were waiting the arrival of more force; he did not, however, think they intended to attack, but to harass, for the purpose of giving confidence to the Indians.

Schuyler transmitted a copy of St. Clair's letter to Washington. "If the enemy's object is not to attack Ticonderoga," writes he, "I suspect their movement is intended to cover an attempt on New Hampshire, or the Mohawk River, or to cut off the communication between Fort Edward and Fort George, or perhaps all three, the more to distract us and divide our force." He urged Washington for re-enforcements as soon as possible. At the same time he wrote to St. Clair to keep scouts on the east side of the lake near the road leading from St. John's to New Hampshire, and on the west, on the road leading to the north branch of the Hudson. This done, he hastened to Albany to forward re-enforcements and bring up the militia.

While there, he received word from St. Clair that the enemy's fleet and army were arrived at Crown Point, and had sent off detachments, one up Otter Creek to cut off the communication by Skenesborough; and another on the west side of the lake to cut off Fort George. It was evident a real attack on Ticonderoga was intended. Claims for assistance came hurrying on from other quarters. A large force (St. Leger's) was said to be arrived at Oswego, and Sir John Johnson with his myrmidons on his way to attack Fort Schuyler, the garrison of which was weak and poorly supplied with cannon.

Schuyler bestirs himself with his usual zeal amid the

thickening alarms. He writes urgent letters to the committee of safety of New York, to General Putnam at Peekskill, to the Governor of Connecticut, to the President of Massachusetts, to the committee of Berkshire, and lastly to Washington, stating the impending dangers and imploring re-enforcements. He exhorts General Herkimer to keep the militia of Tryon County in readiness to protect the western frontier and to check the inroad of Sir John Johnson, and he assures St. Clair that he will move to his aid with the militia of New York as soon as he can collect them.

Dangers accumulate at Ticonderoga according to advices from St. Clair (28th). Seven of the enemy's vessels are lying at Crown Point; the rest of their fleet is probably but a little lower down. Morning guns are heard distinctly at various places. Some troops have debarked and encamped at Chimney Point. There is no prospect, he says, of being able to defend Ticonderoga unless militia come in, and he has thought of calling in those from Berkshire. "Should the enemy invest and blockade us," writes he, "we are infallibly ruined; we shall be obliged to abandon this side (of the lake), and then they will soon force the other from us, nor do I see that a retreat will in any shape be practicable. Everything, however, shall be done that is practicable to frustrate the enemy's designs; but what can be expected from troops ill armed, naked, and unaccoutered?"

Schuyler's aid-de-camp, Major Livingston,* who had been detained at Ticonderoga by indisposition, writes to him (June 30) in a different vein, and presents a young man's view of affairs.

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* Henry Brockholst Livingston: in after years Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States.

"The enemy, after giving us several alarms, made their appearance early this morning off Three Mile Point, in eighteen gunboats, and about nine landed a party of two or three hundred Indians and Canadians. These soon fell in with a scout from us, but being superior in number, obliged them to retreat, though without any loss on our side. The Indians then marched to the front of the French lines, drove in a picket guard, and came so near as to wound two men who were standing behind the works. They have stopped the communication between this and Lake George.

"We have a fair view of their boats, but cannot see that they have brought many regulars with them. At least the number of redcoats in them is very small. The wind having been contrary for several days, has prevented their fleet from coming up. The first fair breeze I shall expect to see them. Many bets are depending that we shall be attacked in the course of this week. Our troops are determined, and in great spirits. They wish to be permitted to drive the savages from Three Mile Point, but General St. Clair chooses to act on the sure side, and risk nothing. The few alarms we have had have been of great service in making the men alert and vigilant; but I am afraid the enemy will repeat them so frequently as to throw them into their former indolence and inattention. General St. Clair has taken the precaution to move most of the stores to the mount [Independence]. This moment two ships and as many sloops have hove in sight. The spirits of the men seem to increase in proportion to the number of the enemy.

"I cannot but esteem myself fortunate that indisposition prevented my returning with you, as it has given me an opportunity of being present at a battle, in which I prom-

ise myself the pleasure of seeing our army flushed with victory." *

The enemy came advancing up the lake on the 30th, their main body under Burgoyne on the west side, the German reserve under Baron Riedesel on the east; communication being maintained by frigates and gunboats, which, in a manner, kept pace between them. It was a magnificent array of warlike means, and the sound of drum and trumpet along the shores, and now and then the thundering of a cannon from the ships, were singularly in contrast with the usual silence of a region little better than a wilderness.

On the 1st of July, Burgoyne encamped four miles north of Ticonderoga, and began to intrench, and to throw a boom across the lake. His advanced guard, under General Fraser, took post at Three Mile Point, and the ships anchored just out of gunshot of the fort.

Here he issued a proclamation still more magniloquent than his speech to the Indians, denouncing woe to all who should persist in rebellion, and laying particular stress upon his means, with the aid of the Indians, to overtake the hardiest enemies of Great Britain and America wherever they might lurk.

General St. Clair was a gallant Scotchman, who had seen service in the old French war as well as in this, and beheld the force arrayed against him without dismay. It is true his garrison was not so numerous as it had been represented to Washington, not exceeding three thousand five hundred men, of whom nine hundred were militia. They were badly equipped also, and few had bayonets; yet, as Major Livingston reported, they were in good heart. St.

* Letter of Major Livingston to General Schuyler, MS.

Clair confided, however, in the strength of his position and the works which had been constructed in connection with it, and trusted he should be able to resist any attempt to take it by storm.

Schuyler at this time was at Albany, sending up re-enforcements of Continental troops and militia, and awaiting the arrival of further re-enforcements, for which sloops had been sent down to Peekskill.

He was endeavoring also to provide for the security of the department in other quarters. The savages had been scalping in the neighborhood of Fort Schuyler; a set of renegade Indians were harassing the settlements on the Susquehanna; and the threatenings of Brant, the famous Indian chief, and the prospect of a British inroad by the way of Oswego, had spread terror through Tryon County, the inhabitants of which called upon him for support.

"The enemy are harassing us in every quarter of this department," writes he. "I am however, happily, thank God, in full health and spirits to enable me to extend my attention to those various quarters, and hope we shall all do well." *

The enemy's maneuver of intrenching themselves and throwing a boom across the lake, of which St. Clair informed him, made him doubt of their being in great force, or intending a serious attack. "I shall have great hopes," writes he to St. Clair, "if General Burgoyne continues in the vicinity of your post until we get up, and dares risk an engagement, we shall give a good account of him." †

To General Herkimer, who commanded the militia in

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* Letter to the Hon. George Clymer.
† Schuyler's Letter Book.

Tryon County, he writes in the same encouraging strain. "From intelligence which I have just now received from Ticonderoga I am not very apprehensive that any great effort will be made against the Mohawk River. I shall, however, keep a watchful eye to the preservation of the western quarter, and have therefore directed Colonel Van Schaick to remain in Tryon County with the [Continental] troops under his command.

"If we act with vigor and spirit, we have nothing to fear; but if once despondency takes place, the worst consequences are to be apprehended. It is, therefore, incumbent on you to labor to keep up the spirits of the people."

In the meantime he awaited the arrival of the troops from Peekskill with impatience. On the 5th they had not appeared. "The moment they do," writes he, "I shall move with them. If they do not arrive by to-morrow, I go without them, and will do the best I can with the militia." He actually did set out at 8 o'clock on the morning of the 7th.

Such was the state of affairs in the north, of which Washington from time to time had been informed. An attack on Ticonderoga appeared to be impending; but as the garrison was in good heart, the commander resolute, and troops were on the way to re-enforce him, a spirited and perhaps successful resistance was anticipated by Washington. His surprise may therefore be imagined, on receiving a letter from Schuyler, dated July 7, conveying the astounding intelligence that Ticonderoga was evacuated!

Schuyler had just received the news at Stillwater on the Hudson when on his way with re-enforcements for the fortress. The first account was so vague that Washington hoped it might prove incorrect. It was confirmed by another letter from Schuyler, dated on the 9th at Fort Edward. A

part of the garrison had been pursued by a detachment of the enemy as far as Fort Anne in that neighborhood, where the latter had been repulsed; as to St. Clair himself and the main part of his forces, they had thrown themselves into the forest, and nothing was known what had become of them!

"I am here," writes Schuyler, "at the head of a handful of men, not above fifteen hundred, with little ammunition, not above five rounds to a man, having neither balls nor lead to make any. The country is in the deepest consternation; no carriages to remove the stores from Fort George, which I expect every moment to hear is attacked; and what adds to my distress is, that a report prevails that I had given orders for the evacuation of Ticonderoga."

Washington was totally at a loss to account for St. Clair's movement. To abandon a fortress which he had recently pronounced so defensible; and to abandon it apparently without firing a gun! and then the strange uncertainty as to his subsequent fortunes, and the whereabout of himself and the main body of his troops! "The affair," writes Washington, "is so mysterious that it baffles even conjecture."

His first attention was to supply the wants of General Schuyler. An express was sent to Springfield for musket cartridges, gunpowder, lead, and cartridge papers. Ten pieces of artillery with harness and proper officers were to be forwarded from Peekskill, as well as intrenching tools. Of tents he had none to furnish, neither could heavy cannon be spared from the defense of the Highlands.

Six hundred recruits, on their march from Massachusetts to Peekskill, were ordered to repair to the re-enforcement of Schuyler; this was all the force that Washington could

venture at this moment to send to his aid; but this addition to his troops, supposing those under St. Clair should have come in, and any number of militia have turned out, would probably form an army equal, if not superior, to that said to be under Burgoyne. Besides, it was Washington's idea that the latter would suspend his operations until General Howe should make a movement in concert. Supposing that movement would be an immediate attempt against the Highlands, he ordered Sullivan with his division to Peekskill to re-enforce General Putnam. At the same time he advanced with his main army to Pompton, and thence to the Clove, a rugged defile through the Highlands on the west side of the Hudson. Here he encamped within eighteen miles of the river, to watch, and be at hand to oppose the designs of Sir William Howe, whatever might be their direction.

On the morning of the 14th came another letter from Schuyler, dated Fort Edward, July 10th. He had that morning received the first tidings of St. Clair and his missing troops, and of their being fifty miles east of him.

Washington hailed the intelligence with that hopeful spirit which improved every ray of light in the darkest moments. "I am happy to hear," writes he, "that General St. Clair and his army are not in the hands of the enemy. I really feared they had become prisoners. The evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence is an event of chagrin and surprise not apprehended, nor within the compass of my reasoning. . . . This stroke is severe indeed, and has distressed us much. But notwithstanding things at present have a dark and gloomy aspect, I hope a spirited opposition will check the progress of General Burgoyne's army, and that the confidence derived from his success will

hurry him into measures that will in their consequences be favorable to us. *We should never despair. Our situation before has been unpromising and has changed for the better, so I trust it will again. If new difficulties arise, we must only put forth new exertions, and proportion our efforts to the exigency of the times.*"

His spirit of candor and moderation is evinced in another letter. "I will not condemn or even pass censure upon any officer unheard, but I think it a duty which General St. Clair owes to his own character to insist upon an opportunity of giving his reasons for his sudden evacuation of a post, which, but a few days before, he, by his own letters, thought tenable, at least for a while. People at a distance are apt to form wrong conjectures, and if General St. Clair has good reasons for the step he has taken, I think the sooner he justifies himself the better. I have mentioned these matters, because he may not know that his conduct is looked upon as very unaccountable by all ranks of people in this part of the country. If he is reprehensible, the public have an undoubted right to call for that justice which is due from an officer who betrays or gives up his post in an unwarrantable manner." *

Having stated the various measures adopted by Washington for the aid of the Northern army at this critical juncture, we will leave him at his encampment in the Clove, anxiously watching the movements of the fleet and the lower army, while we turn to the north, to explain the mysterious retreat of General St. Clair.

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* Letter to Schuyler, 18th July, 1777.

CHAPTER TEN

Particulars of the Evacuation—Indian Scouts in the Vicinity of the Forts—Outposts abandoned by St. Clair—Burgoyne secures Mount Hope—Invests the Fortress—Seizes and occupies Sugar Hill—The Forts overlooked and in Imminent Peril—Determination to Evacuate—Plan of Retreat—Part of the Garrison depart for Skenesborough in the Flotilla—St. Clair crosses with the rest to Fort Independence—A Conflagration reveals his Retreat—The British Camp aroused—Fraser Pursues St. Clair—Burgoyne with his Squadron makes after the Flotilla—Part of the Fugitives overtaken—Flight of the Remainder to Fort Anne—Skirmish of Colonel Long—Retreat to Fort Edward—St. Clair at Castleton—Attack of his Rearguard—Fall of Colonel Francis—Desertion of Colonel Hale—St. Clair reaches Fort Edward—Consternation of the Country—Exultation of the British

In the accounts given in the preceding chapter of the approach of Burgoyne to Ticonderoga, it was stated that he had encamped four miles north of the fortress and intrenched himself. On the 2d of July, Indian scouts made their appearance in the vicinity of a blockhouse and some outworks about the strait or channel leading to Lake George. As General St. Clair did not think the garrison sufficient to defend all the outposts, these works, with some adjacent sawmills, were set on fire and abandoned. The extreme left of Ticonderoga was weak, and might easily be turned; a post had therefore been established in the preceding year, nearly half a mile in advance of the old French lines, on an eminence to the north of them. General St. Clair, through singular remissness, had neglected to secure it. Burgoyne soon discovered this neglect, and hastened to detach Generals

Phillips and Fraser with a body of infantry and light artillery, to take possession of this post. They did so without opposition. Heavy guns were mounted upon it; Fraser's whole corps was stationed there; the post commanded the communication by land and water with Lake George, so as to cut off all supplies from that quarter. In fact, such were the advantages expected from this post, thus neglected by St. Clair, that the British gave it the significant name of Mount Hope.

The enemy now proceeded gradually to invest Ticonderoga. A line of troops was drawn from the western part of Mount Hope round to Three Mile Point, where General Fraser was posted with the advance guard, while General Riedesel encamped with the German reserve in a parallel line, on the opposite side of Lake Champlain, at the foot of Mount Independence. For two days the enemy occupied themselves in making their advances and securing these positions, regardless of a cannonade kept up by the American batteries.

St. Clair began to apprehend that a regular siege was intended, which would be more difficult to withstand than a direct assault; he kept up a resolute aspect, however, and went about among his troops, encouraging them with the hope of a successful resistance, but enjoining incessant vigilance and punctual attendance at the alarm posts at morning and evening roll-call.

With all the pains and expense lavished by the Americans to render these works impregnable, they had strangely neglected the master key by which they were all commanded. This was Sugar Hill, a rugged height, the termination of a mountain ridge which separates Lake Champlain from Lake George. It stood to the south of Ticon-

deroga, beyond the narrow channel which connected the two lakes, and rose precipitously from the waters of Champlain to the height of six hundred feet. It had been pronounced by the Americans too distant to be dangerous. Colonel Trumbull, some time an aid-de-camp to Washington, and subsequently an adjutant, had proved the contrary in the preceding year, by throwing a shot from a six-pounder in the fort nearly to the summit. It was then pronounced inaccessible to an enemy. This Trumbull had likewise proved to be an error, by clambering with Arnold and Wayne to the top, whence they perceived that a practical road for artillery might easily and readily be made. Trumbull had insisted that this was the true point for the fort, commanding the neighboring heights, the narrow parts of both lakes, and the communication between. A small but strong fort here, with twenty-five heavy guns and five hundred men, would be as efficient as one hundred guns and ten thousand men on the extensive works of Ticonderoga.* His suggestions were disregarded. Their wisdom was now to be proved.

The British General Phillips, on taking his position, had regarded the hill with a practiced eye. He caused it to be reconnoitered by a skillful engineer. The report was that it overlooked and had the entire command of Fort Ticonderoga and Fort Independence; being about fourteen hundred yards from the former, and fifteen hundred from the latter; that the ground could be leveled for cannon, and a road cut up the defiles of the mountain in four and twenty hours.

Measures were instantly taken to plant a battery on that height. While the American garrisons were entirely en-

* Trumbull's Autobiography, p. 32.

gaged in a different direction, cannonading Mount Hope and the British lines without material effect, and without provoking a reply, the British troops were busy throughout the day and night cutting a road through rocks and trees and up rugged defiles. Guns, ammunition, and stores, all were carried up the hill in the night; the cannon were hauled up from tree to tree, and before morning the ground was leveled for the battery on which they were to be mounted. To this work, thus achieved by a coup de main, they gave the name of Fort Defiance.

On the fifth of July, to their astonishment and consternation, the garrison beheld a legion of red coats on the summit of this hill, constructing works which must soon lay the fortress at their mercy.

In this sudden and appalling emergency, General St. Clair called a council of war. What was to be done? The batteries from this new fort would probably be open the next day: by that time Ticonderoga might be completely invested and the whole garrison exposed to capture. They had not force sufficient for one-half the works, and General Schuyler, supposed to be at Albany, could afford them no relief. The danger was imminent, and delay might prove fatal. It was unanimously determined to evacuate both Ticonderoga and Mount Independence that very night, and retreat to Skenesborough (now Whitehall), at the upper part of the lake, about thirty miles distant, where there was a stockaded fort. The main body of the army, led by General St. Clair, were to cross to Mount Independence and push for Skenesborough by land, taking a circuitous route through the woods on the east side of the lake, by the way of Castleton.

The cannon, stores, and provisions, together with the wounded and the women, were to be embarked on board

of two hundred bateaux, and conducted to the upper extremity of the lake, by Colonel Long with six hundred men; two hundred of whom in five armed galleys were to form a rearguard.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon; yet all the preparations were to be made for the coming night, and that with as little bustle and movement as possible; for they were overlooked by Fort Defiance and their intentions might be suspected. Everything, therefore, was done quietly but alertly; in the meantime, to amuse the enemy, a cannonade was kept up every half hour toward the new battery on the hill. As soon as evening closed, and their movements could not be discovered, they began in all haste to load the boats. Such of the cannon as could not be taken were ordered to be spiked. It would not do to knock off their trunnions, lest the noise should awaken suspicions. In the hurry several were left uninjured. The lights in the garrison being previously extinguished, their tents were struck and put on board of the boats, and the women and the sick embarked. Everything was conducted in such silence and address that, although it was a moonlight night, the flotilla departed undiscovered; and was soon under the shadows of mountains and overhanging forests.

The retreat by land was not conducted with equal discretion and mystery. General St. Clair had crossed over the bridge to the Vermont side of the lake by three o'clock in the morning, and set forward with his advance through the woods toward Hubbardton; but, before the rearguard under Colonel Francis got in motion, the house at Fort Independence, which had been occupied by the French General de Fermois, was set on fire—by his orders, it is said, though we are loth to charge him with such indiscretion; such gross

and wanton violation of the plan of retreat. The consequences were disastrous. The British sentries at Mount Hope were astonished by a conflagration suddenly lighting up Mount Independence, and revealing the American troops in full retreat; for the rearguard, disconcerted by this sudden exposure, pressed forward for the woods in the utmost haste and confusion.

The drums beat to arms in the British camp. Alarm guns were fired from Mount Hope: General Fraser dashed into Ticonderoga with his pickets, giving orders for his brigade to arm in all haste and follow. By daybreak he had hoisted the British flag over the deserted fortress; before sunrise he had passed the bridge and was in full pursuit of the American rearguard. Burgoyne was roused from his morning slumbers on board of the frigate "Royal George," by the alarm guns from Fort Hope, and a message from General Fraser, announcing the double retreat of the Americans by land and water. From the quarterdeck of the frigate he soon had confirmation of the news. The British colors were flying on Fort Ticonderoga, and Fraser's troops were glittering on the opposite shore.

Burgoyne's measures were prompt. General Riedesel was ordered to follow and support Fraser with a part of the German troops; garrisons were thrown into Ticonderoga and Mount Independence; the main part of the army was embarked on board of the frigates and gunboats; the floating bridge with its boom and chain, which had cost months to construct, was broken through by nine o'clock; when Burgoyne set out with his squadron in pursuit of the flotilla.

We left the latter making its retreat on the preceding evening toward Skenesborough. The lake above Ticonderoga becomes so narrow that, in those times, it was frequently

called South River. Its beautiful waters wound among mountains covered with primeval forests. The bateaux, deeply laden, made their way slowly in a lengthened line; sometimes under the shadows of the mountains, sometimes in the gleam of moonlight. The rearguard of armed galleys followed at wary distance. No immediate pursuit, however, was apprehended. The floating bridge was considered an effectual impediment to the enemy's fleet. Gayety, therefore, prevailed among the fugitives. They exulted in the secrecy and dexterity with which they had managed their retreat, and amused themselves with the idea of what would be the astonishment of the enemy at daybreak. The officers regaled merrily on the stores saved from Ticonderoga, and knocking off the necks of bottles of wine drank a pleasant *reveille* to General Burgoyne.

About three o'clock in the afternoon of the succeeding day, the heavily laden bateaux arrived at Skenesborough. The disembarkation had scarcely commenced when the thundering of artillery was heard from below. Could the enemy be at hand? It was even so. The British gunboats, having pushed on in advance of the frigates, had overtaken and were firing upon the galleys. The latter defended themselves for a while, but at length two struck and three were blown up. The fugitives from them brought word that the British ships not being able to come up, troops and Indians were landing from them and scrambling up the hills; intending to get in the rear of the fort and cut off all retreat.

All now was consternation and confusion. The bateaux, the storehouses, the fort, the mill were all set on fire, and a general flight took place toward Fort Anne, about twelve miles distant. Some made their way in boats up Wood Creek, a winding stream. The main body, under Colonel

Long, retreated by a narrow defile cut through the woods; harassed all night by alarms that the Indians were close in pursuit. Both parties reached Fort Anne by daybreak. It was a small picketed fort, near the junction of Wood Creek and East Creek, about sixteen miles from Fort Edward. General Schuyler arrived at the latter place on the following day. The number of troops with him was inconsiderable, but, hearing of Colonel Long's situation, he immediately sent him a small re-enforcement, with provisions and ammunition, and urged him to maintain his post resolutely.

On the same day Colonel Long's scouts brought in word that there were British redcoats approaching. They were in fact a regiment under Lieutenant-colonel Hill, detached from Skenesborough by Burgoyne in pursuit of the fugitives. Long sallied forth to meet them; posting himself at a rocky defile, where there was a narrow pathway along the border of Wood Creek. As the enemy advanced he opened a heavy fire upon them in front, while a part of his troops, crossing and recrossing the creek, and availing themselves of their knowledge of the ground, kept up a shifting attack from the woods in flank and rear. Apprehensive of being surrounded, the British took post upon a high hill to their right, where they were warmly besieged for nearly two hours, and, according to their own account, would certainly have been forced, had not some of their Indian allies arrived and set up the much-dreaded war-whoop. It was answered with three cheers by the British upon the hill. This changed the fortune of the day. The Americans had nearly expended their ammunition, and had not enough left to cope with this new enemy. They retreated, therefore, to Fort Anne, carrying with them a number of prisoners, among whom were a captain and surgeon. Supposing the troops under Colonel Hill

an advance guard of Burgoyne's army, they set fire to the fort and pushed on to Fort Edward; where they gave the alarm that the main force of the enemy was close after them, and that no one knew what had become of General St. Clair and the troops who had retreated with him. We shall now clear up the mystery of his movements.

His retreat through the woods from Mount Independence continued the first day until night, when he arrived at Castleton, thirty miles from Ticonderoga. His rearguard halted about six miles short, at Hubbardton, to await the arrival of stragglers.

It was composed of three regiments, under Colonels Seth Warner, Francis, and Hale; in all about thirteen hundred men.

Early the next morning, a sultry morning of July, while they were taking their breakfast, they were startled by the report of firearms. Their sentries had discharged their muskets, and came running in with word that the enemy were at hand.

It was General Fraser, with his advance of eight hundred and fifty men, who had pressed forward in the latter part of the night, and now attacked the Americans with great spirit, notwithstanding their superiority in numbers; in fact, he expected to be promptly re-enforced by Riedesel and his Germans. The Americans met the British with great spirit; but at the very commencement of the action Colonel Hale, with a detachment placed under his command to protect the rear, gave way, leaving Warner and Francis with but seven hundred men to bear the brunt of the battle. These posted themselves behind logs and trees in "backwood" style, whence they kept up a destructive fire, and were evidently gaining the advantage, when General Rie-

desel came pressing into the action with his German troops; drums beating and colors flying. There was now an impetuous charge with the bayonet. Colonel Francis was among the first who fell, gallantly fighting at the head of his men.

The Americans, thinking the whole German force upon them, gave way and fled, leaving the ground covered with their dead and wounded. Many others who had been wounded perished in the woods, where they had taken refuge. Their whole loss in killed, wounded, and taken, was upward of three hundred; that of the enemy one hundred and eighty-three. Several officers were lost on both sides. Among those wounded of the British was Major Ackland of the grenadiers, of whose further fortunes in the war we shall have to speak hereafter.

The noise of the firing when the action commenced had reached General St. Clair at Castleton. He immediately sent orders to two militia regiments which were in his rear, and within two miles of the battle ground, to hasten to the assistance of his rearguard. They refused to obey and hurried forward to Castleton. At this juncture St. Clair received information of Burgoyne's arrival at Skenesborough, and the destruction of the American works there. Fearing to be intercepted at Fort Anne, he immediately changed his route, struck into the woods on his left, and directed his march to Rutland, leaving word for Warner to follow him. The latter overtook him two days afterward, with his shattered force reduced to ninety men. As to Colonel Hale, who had pressed toward Castleton at the beginning of the action, he and his men were overtaken the same day by the enemy, and the whole party captured, without making any fight. It has been alleged in his excuse, with apparent jus-

tice, that he and a large portion of his men were in feeble health, and unfit for action; for his own part, he died while yet a prisoner, and never had the opportunity which he sought to vindicate himself before a court-martial.

On the 12th St. Clair reached Fort Edward, his troops haggard and exhausted by their long retreat through the woods. Such is the story of the catastrophe at Fort Ticonderoga, which caused so much surprise and concern to Washington, and of the seven days' mysterious disappearance of St. Clair, which kept every one in the most painful suspense.

The loss of artillery, ammunition, provisions, and stores, in consequence of the evacuation of these northern posts, was prodigious; but the worst effect was the consternation spread throughout the country. A panic prevailed at Albany, the people running about as if distracted, sending off their goods and furniture.* The great barriers of the North, it was said, were broken through, and there was nothing to check the triumphant career of the enemy.

The invading army, both officers and men, according to a British writer of the time, "were highly elated with their fortune, and deemed that and their prowess to be irresistible. They regarded their enemy with the greatest contempt, and considered their own toils to be nearly at an end, and Albany already in their hands."

In England, too, according to the same author, the joy and exultation were extreme; not only at court, but with all those who hoped or wished the unqualified subjugation and unconditional submission of the colonies. "The loss in reputation was greater to the Americans," adds he, "and capable of more fatal consequences than that of ground, of posts, of

* MS. Letter of Richard Varick to Schuyler.

artillery, or of men. All the contemptuous and most degrading charges which had been made by their enemies, of their wanting the resolution and abilities of men, even in the defense of what was dear to them, were now repeated and believed." . . . "It was not difficult to diffuse an opinion that the war, in effect, was over, and that any further resistance would render the terms of their submission worse. Such," he concludes, "were some of the immediate effects of the loss of those grand keys of North America, Ticonderoga and the lakes." *

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Capture of General Prescott—Proffered in Exchange for Lee—Re-enforcements to Schuyler—Arnold sent to the North—Eastern Militia to repair to Saratoga—Further Re-enforcements—General Lincoln and Arnold recommended for Particular Services—Washington's Measures and Suggestions for the Northern Campaign—British Fleet puts to Sea—Conjectures as to its Destination—A Feigned Letter—Appearance and Disappearance of the Fleet—Orders and Counter Orders of Washington—Encamps at Germantown—Anxiety for the Security of the Highlands—George Clinton on Guard—Call on Connecticut

A SPIRITED exploit to the eastward was performed during the prevalence of adverse news from the North. General Prescott had command of the British forces in Rhode Island. His harsh treatment of Colonel Ethan Allen, and his haughty and arrogant conduct on various occasions, had rendered him peculiarly odious to the Americans. Lieuten-

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* Hist. Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 283.

ant-colonel Barton, who was stationed with a force of Rhode Island militia on the mainland, received word that Prescott was quartered at a country house near the western shore of the island, about four miles from Newport, totally unconscious of danger, though in a very exposed situation. He determined, if possible, to surprise and capture him. Forty resolute men joined him in the enterprise. Embarking at night in two boats at Warwick Neck, they pulled quietly across the bay with muffled oars, undiscovered by the ships of war and guard-boats; landed in silence; eluded the vigilance of the guard stationed near the house; captured the sentry at the door and surprised the general in his bed. His aid-de-camp leaped from the window, but was likewise taken. Colonel Barton returned with equal silence and address, and arrived safe at Warwick with his prisoners. A sword was voted to him by Congress, and he received a colonel's commission in the regular army.

Washington hailed the capture of Prescott as a peculiarly fortunate circumstance, furnishing him with an equivalent for General Lee. He accordingly wrote to Sir William Howe, proposing the exchange. "This proposition," writes he, "being agreeable to the letter and spirit of the agreement subsisting between us, will, I hope, have your approbation. I am the more induced to expect it, as it will not only remove one ground of controversy between us, but in its consequences effect the exchanges of Lieutenant-colonel Campbell and the Hessian officers, for a like number of ours of equal rank in your possession."

No immediate reply was received to this letter, Sir William Howe being at sea; in the meantime Prescott remained in durance. "I would have him genteelly accommodated, but strongly guarded," writes Washington. "I would not

admit him to parole, as General Howe has not thought proper to grant General Lee that indulgence." *

Washington continued his anxious exertions to counteract the operations of the enemy; forwarding artillery and ammunition to Schuyler with all the camp furniture that could be spared from his own encampment and from Peekskill. A part of Nixon's brigade was all the re-enforcement he could afford in his present situation. "To weaken this army more than is prudent," writes he, "would perhaps bring destruction upon it, and I look upon the keeping it upon a respectable footing as the only means of preventing a junction of Howe's and Burgoyne's armies, which, if effected, may have the most fatal consequences."

Schuyler had earnestly desired the assistance of an active officer well acquainted with the country. Washington sent him Arnold. "I need not," writes he, "enlarge upon his well-known activity, conduct and bravery. The proofs he has given of all these have gained him the confidence of the public and of the army, the Eastern troops in particular."

The question of rank, about which Arnold was so tenacious, was yet unsettled, and though, had his promotion been regular, he would have been superior in command to General St. Clair, he assured Washington that, on the present occasion, his claim should create no dispute.

Schuyler, in the meantime, aided by Kosciuszko the Pole, who was engineer in his department, had selected two positions on Moses Creek, four miles below Fort Edward; where the troops which had retreated from Ticonderoga, and part of the militia, were throwing up works.

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* Letter to Governor Trumbull. Correspondence of the Revolution, vol. i., Sparks.

To impede the advance of the enemy, he had caused trees to be felled into Wood Creek, so as to render it unnavigable, and the roads between Fort Edward and Fort Anne to be broken up; the cattle in that direction to be brought away, and the forage destroyed. He had drawn off the garrison from Fort George, who left the buildings in flames. "Strengthened by that garrison, who are in good health," writes he, "and if the militia, who are here, or an equal number, can be prevailed on to stay, and the enemy give me a few days more, which I think they will be obliged to do, I shall not be apprehensive that they will be able to force the posts I am about to occupy."

Washington cheered on his faithful coadjutor. His reply to Schuyler (July 22d) was full of that confident hope, founded on sagacious forecast, with which he was prone to animate his generals in time of doubt and difficulty. "Though our affairs for some days past have worn a dark and gloomy aspect, I yet look forward to a fortunate and happy change. I trust General Burgoyne's army will meet sooner or later an effectual check, and, as I suggested before, that the success he has had will precipitate his ruin. From your accounts, he appears to be pursuing that line of conduct which, of all others, is most favorable to us; I mean acting in detachment. This conduct will certainly give room for enterprise on our part, and expose his parties to great hazard. Could we be so happy as to cut one of them off, supposing it should not exceed four, five, or six hundred men, it would inspirit the people and do away much of their present anxiety. In such an event they would lose sight of past misfortunes, and, urged at the same time by a regard to their own security, they would fly to arms and afford every aid in their power."

While he thus suggested bold enterprises, he cautioned Schuyler not to repose too much confidence in the works he was projecting, so as to collect in them a large quantity of stores. "I begin to consider lines as a kind of trap," writes he, "and not to answer the valuable purposes expected from them, unless they are in passes which cannot be avoided by the enemy."

In circulars addressed to the brigadier-generals of militia in the western parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut, he warned them that the evacuation of Ticonderoga had opened a door by which the enemy, unless vigorously opposed, might penetrate the northern part of the State of New York, and the western parts of New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and, forming a junction with General Howe, cut off the communication between the Eastern and Northern States. "It cannot be supposed," adds he, "that the small number of Continental troops assembled at Fort Edward is alone sufficient to check the progress of the enemy. To the militia, therefore, must we look for support in this time of trial; and I trust that you will immediately upon receipt of this, if you have not done it already, march with at least one-third of the militia under your command, and rendezvous at Saratoga, unless directed to some other place by General Schuyler or General Arnold."

Washington now ordered that all the vessels and river craft, not required at Albany, should be sent down to New Windsor and Fishkill, and kept in readiness; for he knew not how soon the movements of General Howe might render it suddenly necessary to transport part of his forces up the Hudson.

Further letters from Schuyler urged the increasing exigencies of his situation. It was harvest time. The militia,

impatient at being detained from their rural labors, were leaving him in great numbers. In a council of general officers it had been thought advisable to give leave of absence to half, lest the whole should depart. He feared those who remained would do so but a few days. The enemy were steadily employed cutting a road toward him from Skenesborough. From the number of horse they were reported to have, and to expect, they might intend to bring their provisions on horseback. If so, they would be able to move with expedition. In this position of affairs, he urged to be reenforced as speedily as possible.

Washington, in reply, informed him that he had ordered a further re-enforcement of General Glover's brigade, which was all he could possibly furnish in his own exigencies. He trusted affairs with Schuyler would soon wear a more smiling aspect, that the Eastern States, who were so deeply concerned in the matter, would exert themselves, by effectual succors, to enable him to check the progress of the enemy, and repel a danger by which they were immediately threatened. From the information he had received, he supposed the force of the enemy to be little more than five thousand. "They seem," said he, "to be unprovided with wagons to transport the immense quantity of baggage and warlike apparatus, without which they cannot pretend to penetrate the country. You mention their having a great number of horses, but they must nevertheless require a considerable number of wagons, as there are many things which cannot be transported on horses. They can never think of advancing without securing their rear, and the force with which they can act against you will be greatly reduced by detachments necessary for that purpose; and as they have to cut out their passage, and to remove the impediments you have thrown in

their way, before they can proceed, this circumstance, with the encumbrance they must feel in their baggage, stores, etc., will inevitably retard their march, and give you leisure and opportunity to prepare a good reception for them. . . . I have directed General Lincoln to repair to you as speedily as the state of his health, which is not very perfect, will permit; this gentleman has always supported the character of a judicious, brave, active officer, and he is exceedingly popular in the State of Massachusetts, to which he belongs; he will have a degree of influence over the militia which cannot fail of being highly advantageous. I have intended him more particularly for the command of the militia, and I promise myself it will have a powerful tendency to make them turn out with more cheerfulness, and to inspire them with perseverance to remain in the field, and with fortitude and spirit to do their duty while in it." *

Washington highly approved of a measure suggested by Schuyler, of stationing a body of troops somewhere about the Hampshire Grants (Vermont), so as to be in the rear or on the flank of Burgoyne, should he advance. It would make the latter, he said, very circumspect in his advances, if it did not entirely prevent them. It would keep him in continual anxiety for his rear, and oblige him to leave the posts behind him much stronger than he would otherwise do. He advised that General Lincoln should have command of the corps thus posted, "as no person could be more proper for it."

He recommended, moreover, that in case the enemy should make any formidable movement in the neighborhood of Fort Schuyler (Stanwix), on the Mohawk River, General

* Schuyler's Letter Book.

Arnold, or some other sensible, spirited officer, should be sent to take charge of that post, keep up the spirits of the inhabitants, and cultivate and improve the favorable disposition of the Indians.

The reader will find in the sequel what a propitious effect all these measures had upon the fortunes of the Northern campaign, and with what admirable foresight Washington calculated all its chances. Due credit must also be given to the sagacious counsels and executive energy of Schuyler; who suggested some of the best moves in the campaign, and carried them vigorously into action. Never was Washington more ably and loyally seconded by any of his generals.

But now the attention of the commander-in-chief is called to the seaboard. On the 23d of July, the fleet, so long the object of watchful solicitude, actually put to sea. The force embarked, according to subsequent accounts, consisted of thirty-six British and Hessian battalions, including the light infantry and grenadiers, with a powerful artillery; a New York corps of provincials, or royalists, called the Queen's Rangers, and a regiment of light-horse; between fifteen and eighteen thousand men in all. The force left with General Sir Henry Clinton for the protection of New York consisted of seventeen battalions, a regiment of light-horse, and the remainder of the provincial corps.*

The destination of the fleet was still a matter of conjecture. Just after it had sailed, a young man presented himself at one of General Putnam's outposts. He had been a prisoner in New York, he said, but had received his liberty and a large reward on undertaking to be the bearer of a letter from General Howe to Burgoyne. This letter his feelings

* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 250.

of patriotism prompted him to deliver up to General Putnam. The letter was immediately transmitted by the general to Washington. It was in the handwriting of Howe and bore his signature. In it he informed Burgoyne, that, instead of any designs up the Hudson, he was bound to the east against Boston. "If," said he, "according to my expectations, we may succeed in getting possession of it, I shall, without loss of time, proceed to co-operate with you in the defeat of the rebel army opposed to you. Clinton is sufficiently strong to amuse Washington and Putnam. I am now making demonstrations to the southward, which I think will have the full effect in carrying our plan into execution."

Washington at once pronounced the letter a feint. "No stronger proof could be given," said he, "that Howe is not going to the eastward. The letter was evidently intended to fall into our hands. If there were not too great a risk of the dispersion of their fleet, I should think their putting to sea a mere maneuver to deceive, and the North River still their object. I am persuaded, more than ever, that Philadelphia is the place of destination."

He now set out with his army for the Delaware, ordering Sullivan and Stirling with their divisions to cross the Hudson from Peekskill, and proceed toward Philadelphia. Every movement and order showed his doubt and perplexity, and the circumspection with which he had to proceed. On the 30th he writes from Coryell's Ferry, about thirty miles from Philadelphia, to General Gates, who was in that city: "As we are yet uncertain as to the real destination of the enemy, though the Delaware seems the most probable, I have thought it prudent to halt the army at this place, Howell's Ferry, and Trenton, at least till the fleet actually enters the bay and puts the matter beyond a doubt. From hence we

can be on the proper ground to oppose them before they can possibly make their arrangements and dispositions for an attack. . . . That the post in the Highlands may not be left too much exposed, I have ordered General Sullivan's division to halt at Morristown, whence it will march southward, if there should be occasion, or northward upon the first advice that the enemy should be throwing any force up the North River. General Howe's in a manner abandoning General Burgoyne is so unaccountable a matter, that, till I am fully assured it is so, *I cannot help casting my eyes continually behind me.* As I shall pay no regard to any flying reports of the appearance of the fleet, I shall expect an account of it from you, the moment you have ascertained it to your satisfaction."

On the 31st, he was informed that the enemy's fleet of two hundred and twenty-eight sail had arrived the day previous at the Capes of Delaware. He instantly wrote to Putnam to hurry on two brigades, which had crossed the river, and to let Schuyler and the commanders in the Eastern States know that they had nothing to fear from Howe, and might bend all their forces, Continental and militia, against Burgoyne. In the meantime he moved his camp to Germantown, about six miles from Philadelphia, to be at hand for the defense of that city.

The very next day came word, by express, that the fleet had again sailed out of the Capes, and apparently shaped its course eastward. "This surprising event gives me the greatest anxiety," writes he to Putnam (Aug. 1), "and unless every possible exertion is made, may be productive of the happiest consequences to the enemy and the most injurious to us. . . . The importance of preventing Mr. Howe's getting possession of the Highlands by a *coup de*

main is infinite to America; and, in the present situation of things, every effort that can be thought of must be used. The probability of his going to the eastward is exceedingly small, and the ill effects that might attend such a step inconsiderable, in comparison with those that would inevitably attend a successful stroke on the Highlands."

Under this impression Washington sent orders to Sullivan to hasten back with his division and the two brigades which had recently left Peekskill, and to recross the Hudson to that post as speedily as possible, intending to forward the rest of the army with all the expedition in his power. He wrote, also, to General George Clinton to re-enforce Putnam with as many of the New York militia as could be collected. Clinton, be it observed, had just been installed Governor of the State of New York; the first person elevated to that office under the Constitution. He still continued in actual command of the militia of the State, and it was with great satisfaction that Washington subsequently learned he had determined to resume the command of Fort Montgomery in the Highlands: "There cannot be a more proper man," writes he, "on every account."

Washington, moreover, requested Putnam to send an express to Governor Trumbull, urging assistance from the militia of his State without a moment's loss of time. "Connecticut cannot be in more danger through any channel than this, and every motive of its own interest and the general good demands its utmost endeavors to give you effectual assistance. Governor Trumbull will, I trust, be sensible of this."

And here we take occasion to observe, that there could be no surer reliance for aid in time of danger than the patriotism of Governor Trumbull; or were there men more ready

to obey a sudden appeal to arms than the yeomanry of Connecticut; however much their hearts might subsequently yearn toward the farms and firesides they had so promptly abandoned. No portion of the Union was more severely tasked, throughout the Revolution, for military services; and Washington avowed, when the great struggle was over, that, "if all the States had done their duty as well as the little State of Connecticut, the war would have been ended long ago." *

CHAPTER TWELVE

Gates on the Alert for a Command—Schuyler undermined in Congress—Put on his Guard—Courts a Scrutiny, but not before an expected Engagement—Summoned with St. Clair to Headquarters—Gates appointed to the Northern Department—Washington's Speculations on the Successes of Burgoyne—Ill-judged Meddlings of Congress with the Commissariat—Colonel Trumbull resigns in consequence

We have cited in a preceding page a letter from Washington to Gates at Philadelphia, requiring his vigilant attention to the movements of the enemy's fleet; that ambitious officer, however, was engrossed at the time by matters more important to his individual interests. The command of the Northern department seemed again within his reach. The evacuation of Ticonderoga had been imputed by many either to cowardice or treachery on the part of General St. Clair, and the enemies of Schuyler had, for some time past, been endeavoring to involve him in the disgrace of the transaction. It is true he was absent from the fortress at the time, zealously engaged, as we have shown, in procuring and for-

* Communicated by Professor B. Silliman.

warding re-enforcements and supplies; but it was alleged that the fort had been evacuated by his order, and that, while there, he had made such dispositions as plainly indicated an intention to deliver it to the enemy. In the eagerness to excite popular feeling against him, old slanders were revived, and the failure of the invasion of Canada, and all the subsequent disasters in that quarter, were again laid to his charge as commanding general of the Northern department. "In short," writes Schuyler in one of his letters, "every art is made use of to destroy that confidence which it is so essential the army should have in its general officers, and this too by people pretending to be friends to the country." *

These charges, which for some time existed merely in popular clamor, had recently been taken up in Congress, and a strong demonstration had been made against him by some of the New England delegates. "Your enemies in this quarter," writes his friend the Hon. William Duer (July 29th), "are leaving no means unessayed to blast your character, and to impute to your appointment in that department a loss which, rightly investigated, can be imputed to very different causes.

"Be not surprised if you should be desired to attend Congress, to give an account of the loss of Ticonderoga. With respect to the result of the inquiry I am under no apprehensions. Like gold tried in the fire, I trust that you, my dear friend, will be found more pure and bright than ever. . . . From the nature of your department, and other unavoidable causes, you have not had an opportunity, during the course of this war, of evincing that spirit which *I* and your more

* Schuyler to Governor Trumbull. Letter Book.

intimate friends know you to possess; of this circumstance prejudice takes a cruel advantage, and malice lends an easy ear to her dictates. A hint on this subject is sufficient. You will not, I am sure, see this place till your conduct gives the lie to this insinuation, as it has done before to every other which your enemies have so industriously circulated." *

Schuyler, in reply, expressed the most ardent wish that Congress would order him to attend and give an account of his conduct. He wished his friends to push for the closest scrutiny, confident that it would redound to his honor. "I would not, however, wish the scrutiny to take place immediately," adds he, "as we shall probably soon have an engagement, if we are so re-enforced with militia as to give us a probable chance of success. . . . Be assured, my dear friend, if a general engagement takes place, whatever may be the event, you will not have occasion to blush for your friend." †

It seemed to be the object of Mr. Schuyler's enemies to forestall his having such a chance of distinguishing himself. The business was pushed in Congress more urgently than even Mr. Duer had anticipated. Besides the allegations against him in regard to Ticonderoga, his unpopularity in the Eastern States was urged as a sufficient reason for discontinuing him in his present command, as the troops from that quarter were unwilling to serve under him. This had a great effect in the present time of peril, with several of the delegates from the East, who discredited the other charges against him. The consequence was that after long and ardent debates, in which some of the most eminent delegates from New York, who intimately knew his worth, stood up

* Schuyler's Papers. † Schuyler's Letter Book.

in his favor, it was resolved (Aug. 1st), that both General Schuyler and General St. Clair should be summoned to headquarters to account for the misfortunes in the North, and that Washington should be directed to order such general officer as he should think proper to succeed General Schuyler in the command of the Northern Department.

The very next day a letter was addressed to Washington by several of the leading Eastern members, men of unquestionable good faith, such as Samuel and John Adams, urging the appointment of Gates. "No man, in our opinion," said they, "will be more likely to restore harmony, order and discipline, and retrieve our affairs in that quarter. He has, on experience, acquired the confidence and stands high in the esteem of the Eastern troops."

Washington excused himself from making any nomination, alleging that the Northern department had, in a great measure, been considered a separate one; that, moreover, the situation of the department was delicate, and might involve interesting and delicate consequences. The nomination, therefore, was made by Congress; the Eastern influence prevailed, and Gates received the appointment, so long the object of his aspirations, if not intrigues.

Washington deeply regretted the removal of a noble-hearted man with whom he had acted so harmoniously, whose exertions had been so energetic and unwearied, and who was so peculiarly fitted for the various duties of the department. He consoled himself, however, with the thought that the excuse of want of confidence in the general officers, hitherto alleged by the Eastern States for withholding reenforcements, would be obviated by the presence of this man of their choice.

With the prevalent wisdom of his pen, he endeavored to

allay the distrusts and apprehensions awakened by the misfortune at Ticonderoga, which he considered the worst consequence of that event. "If the matter were coolly and dispassionately considered," writes he to the council of safety of the State of New York, "there would be nothing found so formidable in General Burgoyne and the force under him with all his successes to countenance the least degree of despondency, and experience would show that even the moderate exertions of the States more immediately interested would be sufficient to check his career, and, perhaps, convert the advantages he has gained to his ruin. . . . If I do not give so effectual aid as I could wish to the Northern army, it is not from want of inclination, nor from being too little impressed with the importance of doing it; but because the state of affairs in this quarter will not possibly admit of it. It would be the height of impolicy to weaken ourselves too much here, in order to increase our strength there; and it must certainly be considered more difficult, as well as of greater moment, to control the main army of the enemy, than an inferior, and, I may say, dependent one; for it is pretty obvious that if General Howe can be kept at bay, and prevented from effecting his purposes, the successes of General Burgoyne, whatever they may be, must be partial and temporary."

The sagacity and foresight of this policy will be manifested by after events.

On the same day on which the above letter was written, he officially announced to Gates his appointment, and desired him to proceed immediately to the place of his destination: wishing him success, and that he "might speedily be able to restore the face of affairs in that quarter."

About this time took effect a measure of Congress, mak-

ing a complete change in the commissariat. This important and complicated department had hitherto been under the management of one commissary-general, Colonel Joseph Trumbull of Connecticut. By the new arrangement there were to be two commissaries-general, one of purchases, the other of issues; each to be appointed by Congress. They were to have several deputy commissaries under them, but accountable to Congress, and to be appointed and removed by that body. These, and many subordinate arrangements, had been adopted in opposition to the opinion of Washington, and, most unfortunately, were brought into operation in the midst of this perplexed and critical campaign.

The first effect was to cause the resignation of Colonel Trumbull, who had been nominated commissary of purchases; and the entrance into office of a number of inexperienced men. The ultimate effect was to paralyze the organization of this vital department; to cause delay and confusion in furnishing and forwarding supplies; and to retard and embarrass the operations of the different armies throughout the year. Washington had many dangers and difficulties to harass and perplex him throughout this complicated campaign, and not among the least may be classed the "stumblings of Congress."

NOTE

An author, eminent for his historical researches, expresses himself at a loss to explain the prejudice existing against General Schuyler among the people of the New England States. "There was not an individual connected with the Revolution," observes he, "concerning whom there is more abundant evidence of his patriotism and unwearied services in the cause of his country."

Wilkinson, at that time a devoted follower of Gates, and likely to know the influences that operated against his rival, traces this prejudice up to times prior to the Revolution, when Schuyler acted as commissioner on the part of New York in settling the partition line between that colony and Massachusetts Bay. This gave rise to the feuds and controversies concerning the Hampshire Grants, in which, according to Wilkinson, the parties were distinguished by the designations of Yankee and Yorker. The zealous exertions of Schuyler on behalf of New York gained him the ill will of the Hampshire grantees, and of Eastern men of the first rank with whom he came in collision. This feeling survived the controversy, and existed among the militia from those parts. On the other hand, Wilkinson observes, "It was General Gates's policy to favor the views of the inhabitants of the Hampshire Grants, which made him popular with these people."

Somewhat of the prejudice against Schuyler Wilkinson ascribes to social habits and manners, "those of New England at the time being democratic and puritanical, while in New York they were courtly and aristocratical." Schuyler was a man of the world, and of society, cultivated, and well-bred; he was an eléve too of Major-general Bradstreet in the seven years' war; and had imbibed notions of military carriage and decorum in an aristocratic school; all this rendered him impatient at times of the deficiencies in these respects among the raw militia officers, and made the latter consider him haughty and reserved.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Washington's Perplexities about the British Fleet—Putnam and Governor Clinton put on the Alert in the Highlands—Morgan and his Riflemen sent to the North—Washington at Philadelphia—His first Interview with Lafayette—Intelligence about the Fleet—Explanations of its Movements—Review of the Army—Lafayette mistakes the nature of his Commission—His Alliance with Washington—March of the Army through Philadelphia—Encampment at Wilmington

For several days Washington remained at Germantown in painful uncertainty about the British fleet; whether gone to the south or to the east. The intense heat of the weather made him unwilling again to move his army, already excessively harassed by marchings and counter-marchings. Concluding, at length, that the fleet had actually gone to the east, he was once more on the way to recross the Delaware, when an express overtook him on the 10th of August, with tidings that three days before it had been seen off Sinepuxent Inlet, about sixteen leagues south of the Capes of Delaware.

Again he came to a halt, and waited for further intelligence. Danger suggested itself from a different quarter. Might it not be Howe's plan, by thus appearing with his ships at different places, to lure the army after him, and thereby leave the country open for Sir Henry Clinton with the troops at New York to form a junction with Burgoyne? With this idea Washington wrote forthwith to the veteran Putnam to be on the alert; collect all the force he could to

strengthen his post at Peekskill, and send down spies to ascertain whether Sir Henry Clinton was actually at New York, and what troops he had there. "If he has the number of men with him that is reported," observes Washington, "it is probably with the intention to attack you from below, while Burgoyne comes down upon you from above."

The old general, whose boast it was that he never slept but with one eye, was already on the alert. A circumstance had given him proof positive that Sir Henry was in New York, and had roused his military ire. A spy, sent by that commander, had been detected furtively collecting information of the force and condition of the post at Peekskill, and had undergone a military trial. A vessel of war came up the Hudson in all haste, and landed a flag of truce at Verplanck's Point, by which a message was transmitted to Putnam from Sir Henry Clinton, claiming Edmund Palmer as a lieutenant in the British service.

The reply of the old general was brief but emphatic.

"HEADQUARTERS, 7th Aug., 1777.

"Edmund Palmer, an officer in the enemy's service, was taken as a spy lurking within our lines; he has been tried as a spy, condemned as a spy, and shall be executed as a spy; and the flag is ordered to depart immediately.

"ISRAEL PUTNAM."

"P.S.—He has, accordingly, been executed."

Governor Clinton, the other guardian of the Highlands, and actually at his post at Fort Montgomery, was equally on the alert. He had faithfully followed Washington's directions, in ordering out militia from different counties to re-enforce his own garrison and the army under Schuyler.

"I never knew the militia come out with greater alacrity," writes he; "but, as many of them have yet a great part of their harvests in the field, I fear it will be difficult to detain them long, unless the enemy will make some movements that indicate a design of coming this way suddenly, and so obvious as to be believed by the militia."

At the same time the worthy governor expressed his surprise that the Northern army had not been re-enforced from the eastward. "The want of confidence in the general officers to the northward," adds he, "is the specious reason. To me it appears to be a very weak one. Common gratitude to a sister State, as well as duty to the continent at large, conspire in calling on our Eastern neighbors to step forth on this occasion."

One measure more was taken by Washington, during this interval, in aid of the Northern department. The Indians who accompanied Burgoyne were objects of great dread to the American troops, especially the militia. As a counterpoise to them, he now sent up Colonel Morgan with five hundred riflemen, to fight them in their own way. "They are all chosen men," said he, "selected from the army at large, and well acquainted with the use of rifles and with that mode of fighting. I expect the most eminent services from them, and I shall be mistaken if their presence does not go far toward producing a general desertion among the savages." It was, indeed, an arm of strength, which he could but ill spare from his own army.

Putnam was directed to have sloops ready to transport them up the Hudson, and Gates was informed of their being on their way, and about what time he might expect them, as well as two regiments from Peekskill, under Colonels Van Courtlandt and Livingston.

"With these re-enforcements, besides the militia under General Lincoln," writes Washington to Gates, "I am in hopes you will find yourself at least equal to stop the progress of Mr. Burgoyne, and, by cutting off his supplies of provisions, to render his situation very ineligible." Washington was thus, in a manner, carrying on two games at once, with Howe on the seaboard and with Burgoyne on the upper waters of the Hudson, and endeavoring by skillful movements to give check to both. It was an arduous and complicated task, especially with his scanty and fluctuating means, and the wide extent of country and great distances over which he had to move his men.

His measures to throw a force in the rear of Burgoyne were now in a fair way of being carried into effect. Lincoln was at Bennington. Stark had joined him with a body of New Hampshire militia, and a corps of Massachusetts militia was arriving. "Such a force in his rear," observed Washington, "will oblige Burgoyne to leave such strong posts behind as must make his main body very weak, and extremely capable of being repulsed by the force we have in front."

During his encampment in the neighborhood of Philadelphia, Washington was repeatedly at that city, making himself acquainted with the military capabilities of the place and its surrounding country, and directing the construction of fortifications on the river. In one of these visits he became acquainted with the young Marquis de Lafayette, who had recently arrived from France, in company with a number of French, Polish, and German officers, among whom was the Baron de Kalb. The marquis was not quite twenty years of age, yet had already been married nearly three years to a lady of rank and fortune. Full of the romance

of liberty, he had torn himself from his youthful bride, turned his back upon the gayeties and splendors of a court, and in defiance of impediments and difficulties multiplied in his path, had made his way to America to join its hazardous fortunes.

He sent in his letters of recommendation to Mr. Lovell, Chairman of the Committee of Foreign Affairs; and applied the next day at the door of Congress to know his success. Mr. Lovell came forth and gave him but little encouragement; Congress, in fact, was embarrassed by the number of foreign applications, many without merit. Lafayette immediately sent in the following note: "After many sacrifices, I have the right to ask two favors; one is to serve at my own expense; the other to commence by serving as a volunteer."*

This simple appeal had its effect: it called attention to his peculiar case, and Congress resolved, on the 31st of July, that in consideration of his zeal, his illustrious family and connections, he should have the rank of major-general in the army of the United States.

It was at a public dinner, where a number of members of Congress were present, that Lafayette first saw Washington. He immediately knew him, he said, from the officers who surrounded him, by his commanding air and person. When the party was breaking up, Washington took him aside, complimented him in a gracious manner on his disinterested zeal and the generosity of his conduct, and invited him to make headquarters his home. "I cannot promise you the luxuries of a court," said he, "but as you have become an American soldier, you will, doubtless, accommodate yourself to the fare of an American army."

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* Memoires du Gen. Lafayette, tom. i., p. 19.

Many days had now elapsed without further tidings of the fleet. What had become of it? Had Howe gone against Charleston? If so, the distance was too great to think of following him. Before the army, debilitated and wasted by a long march, under a summer sun, in an unhealthy climate, could reach there, he might accomplish every purpose he had in view, and re-embark his troops to turn his arms against Philadelphia, or any other point, without the army being at hand to oppose him.

What, under these uncertainties, was to be done? remain inactive, in the remote probability of Howe's returning this way; or proceed to the Hudson with a view either to oppose Burgoyne, or make an attempt upon New York? A successful stroke with respect to either might make up for any losses sustained in the South. The latter was unanimously determined in a council of war, in which the Marquis de Lafayette took part. As it was, however, a movement that might involve the most important consequences, Washington sent his aid-de-camp, Colonel Alexander Hamilton, with a letter to the President of Congress, requesting the opinion of that body. Congress approved the decision of the council, and the army was about to be put in march, when all these tormenting uncertainties were brought to an end by intelligence that the fleet had actually entered the Chesapeake, and anchored at Swan Point, at least two hundred miles within the capes. "By General Howe's coming so far up the Chesapeake," writes Washington, "he must mean to reach Philadelphia by that route, though to be sure it is a strange one."

The mystery of these various appearances and vanishings, which had caused so much wonder and perplexity, is easily explained. Shortly before putting to sea with the

ships of war, Howe had sent a number of transports, and a ship cut down as a floating battery, up the Hudson, which had induced Washington to dispatch troops to the Highlands. After putting to sea, the fleet was a week in reaching the Capes of Delaware. When there, the commanders were deterred from entering the river by reports of measures taken to obstruct its navigation. It was then determined to make for Chesapeake Bay, and approach, in that way, as near as possible to Philadelphia. Contrary winds, however, kept them for a long time from getting into the bay.

Lafayette, in his Memoirs, describes a review of Washington's army which he witnessed about this time. "Eleven thousand men, but tolerably armed, and still worse clad, presented," he said, "a singular spectacle; in this party-colored and often naked state, the best dresses were hunting shirts of brown linen. Their tactics were equally irregular. They were arranged without regard to size, excepting that the smallest men were the front rank; with all this, there were good-looking soldiers conducted by zealous officers."

"We ought to feel embarrassed," said Washington to him, "in presenting ourselves before an officer just from the French army."

"It is to learn, and not to instruct, that I come here," was Lafayette's apt and modest reply; and it gained him immediate popularity.

The marquis, however, had misconceived the nature of his appointment; his commission was merely honorary, but he had supposed it given with a view to the command of a division of the army. This misconception on his part caused Washington some embarrassment. The marquis, with his characteristic vivacity and ardor, was eager for immediate employ. He admitted that he was young and inexperienced,

GENERAL THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE.

Irving, Vol. Thirteen, p. 479.

but always accompanied the admission with the assurance that, so soon as Washington should think him fit for the command of a division, he would be ready to enter upon the duties of it, and, in the meantime, offered his services for a smaller command. "What the designs of Congress respecting this gentleman are, and what line of conduct I am to pursue to comply with their design and his expectations," writes Washington, "I know not, and beg to be instructed."

"The numberless applications for employment by foreigners under their respective appointments," continues he, "add no small embarrassment to a command, which, without it, is abundantly perplexed by the different tempers I have to do with, and the different modes which the respective States have pursued in nominating and arranging their officers; *the combination of all which is but too just a representation of a great chaos, from whence we are endeavoring, how successfully time only can show, to draw some regularity and order.*" * How truly is here depicted one of the great difficulties of his command, continually tasking his equity and equanimity. In the present instance it was intimated to Washington that he was not bound by the tenor of Lafayette's commission to give him a command; but was at liberty to follow his own judgment in the matter. This still left him in a delicate situation with respect to the marquis, whose prepossessing manners and self-sacrificing zeal inspired regard; but whose extreme youth and inexperience necessitated caution. Lafayette, however, from the first attached himself to Washington with an affectionate reverence, the sincerity of which could not be mistaken, and

* Washington to Benjamin Harrison. Sparks, v. 35.

soon won his way into a heart, which, with all its apparent coldness, was naturally confiding and required sympathy and friendship; and it is a picture well worthy to be hung up in history—this cordial and enduring alliance of the calm, dignified, sedate Washington, mature in years and wisdom, and the young, buoyant, enthusiastic Lafayette.

The several divisions of the army had been summoned to the immediate neighborhood of Philadelphia, and the militia of Pennsylvania, Delaware, and the northern parts of Virginia, were called out. Many of the militia, with Colonel Proctor's corps of artillery, had been ordered to rendezvous at Chester on the Delaware, about twelve miles below Philadelphia; and by Washington's orders, General Wayne left his brigade under the next in command, and repaired to Chester, to arrange the troops assembling there.

As there had been much disaffection to the cause evinced in Philadelphia, Washington, in order to encourage its friends and dishearten its enemies, marched with the whole army through the city, down Front and up Chestnut Street. Great pains were taken to make the display as imposing as possible. All were charged to keep to their ranks, carry their arms well, and step in time to the music of the drums and fifes, collected in the center of each brigade. "Though indifferently dressed," says a spectator, "they held well-burnished arms, and carried them like soldiers, and looked, in short, as if they might have faced an equal number with a reasonable prospect of success." To give them something of a uniform appearance, they had sprigs of green in their hats.

Washington rode at the head of the troops attended by his numerous staff, with the Marquis Lafayette by his side. The long column of the army, broken into divisions and brigades, the pioneers with their axes, the squadrons of horse,

the extended trains of artillery, the tramp of steed, the bray of trumpet, and the spirit-stirring sound of drum and fife, all had an imposing effect on a peaceful city unused to the sight of marshaled armies. The disaffected, who had been taught to believe the American forces much less than they were in reality, were astonished as they gazed on the lengthening procession of a host, which, to their unpracticed eyes, appeared innumerable; while the whigs, gaining fresh hope and animation from the sight, cheered the patriot squadrons as they passed.

Having marched through Philadelphia, the army continued on to Wilmington, at the confluence of Christiana Creek and the Brandywine, where Washington set up his headquarters, his troops being encamped on the neighboring heights.

We will now revert to the other object of Washington's care and solicitude, the invading army of Burgoyne in the North; and will see how far his precautionary measures were effective.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Burgoyne at Skenesborough—Prepares to move toward the Hudson—Major Skene the Royalist—Slow March to Fort Anne—Schuyler at Fort Miller—Painted Warriors—Langlade—St. Luc—Honor of the Tomahawk—Tragical Story of Miss McCrea—Its Results—Burgoyne advances to Fort Edward—Schuyler at Stillwater—Joined by Lincoln—Burgoyne deserted by his Indian Allies

In a preceding chapter we left Burgoyne, early in July, at Skenesborough, of which he had just gained possession. He remained there nearly three weeks, awaiting the arrival

of the residue of his troops, with tents, baggage, and provisions, and preparing for his grand move toward the Hudson River. Many royalists flocked to his standard. One of the most important was Major Skene, from whom the place was named, being its founder and the owner of much land in its neighborhood. He had served in the French war, but retired on half pay; bought "soldiers' grants" of land lying within this township at a trifling price, had their titles secured by royal patent, and thus made a fortune. Burgoyne considered him a valuable adjunct and counselor, and frequently took advice from him in his campaign through this part of the country.

The progress of the army toward the Hudson was slow and difficult, in consequence of the impediments which Schuyler had multiplied in his way during his long halt at Skenesborough. Bridges broken down had to be rebuilt; great trees to be removed which had been felled across the roads and into Wood Creek, which stream was completely choked. It was not until the latter part of July that Burgoyne reached Fort Anne. At his approach, General Schuyler retired from Fort Edward and took post at Fort Miller, a few miles lower down the Hudson.

The Indian allies who had hitherto accompanied the British army had been more troublesome than useful. Neither Burgoyne nor his officers understood their language, but were obliged to communicate with them through Canadian interpreters; too often designing knaves, who played false to both parties; the Indians, too, were of the tribes of Lower Canada, corrupted and debased by intercourse with white men. It had been found difficult to draw them from the plunder of Ticonderoga, or to restrain their murderous propensities.

A party had recently arrived of a different stamp. Braves of the Ottawa and other tribes from the upper country; painted and decorated with savage magnificence, and bearing trophies of former triumphs. They were, in fact, according to Burgoyne, the very Indians who had aided the French in the defeat of Braddock, and were under the conduct of two French leaders; one, named Langlade, had command of them on that very occasion; the other, named St. Luc, is described by Burgoyne as a Canadian gentleman of honor and abilities, and one of the best partisans of the French in the war of 1756.

Burgoyne trusted to his newly arrived Indians to give a check to the operations of Schuyler, knowing the terror they inspired throughout the country. He thought also to employ them in a wild foray to the Connecticut River, to force a supply of provisions, intercept re-enforcements to the American army, and confirm the jealousy which he had, in many ways, endeavored to excite in the New England provinces. He was naturally a humane man, and disliked Indian allies, but these had hitherto served in company with civilized troops, and he trusted to the influence possessed over them by St. Luc and Langlade to keep them within the usages of war. A circumstance occurred, however, which showed how little the "wild honor" of these warriors of the tomahawk is to be depended upon.

In General Fraser's division was a young officer, Lieutenant David Jones, an American loyalist. His family had their home in the vicinity of Fort Edward before the Revolution. A mutual attachment had taken place between the youth and a beautiful girl, Jane McCrea. She was the daughter of a Scotch Presbyterian clergyman of the Jerseys, some time deceased, and resided with her brother on the

banks of the Hudson a few miles below Fort Edward. The lovers were engaged to be married, when the breaking out of the war severed families and disturbed all the relations of life. The Joneses were royalists; the brother of Miss McCrea was a stanch whig. The former removed to Canada, where David Jones was among the most respectable of those who joined the royal standard, and received a lieutenant's commission.

The attachment between the lovers continued, and it is probable that a correspondence was kept up between them. Lieutenant Jones was now in Fraser's camp; in his old neighborhood. Miss McCrea was on a visit to a widow lady, Mrs. O'Neil, residing at Fort Edward. The approach of Burgoyne's army had spread an alarm through the country; the inhabitants were flying from their homes. The brother of Miss McCrea determined to remove to Albany, and sent for his sister to return home and make ready to accompany him. She hesitated to obey. He sent a more urgent message, representing the danger of lingering near the fort, which must inevitably fall into the hands of the enemy. Still she lingered. The lady with whom she was a guest was a royalist, a friend of General Fraser; her roof would be respected. Even should Fort Edward be captured, what had Jane to fear? Her lover was in the British camp; the capture of the fort would reunite them.

Her brother's messages now became peremptory. She prepared, reluctantly, to obey, and was to embark in a large bateau which was to convey several families down the river. The very morning when the embarkation was to take place the neighborhood was a scene of terror. A marauding party of Indians, sent out by Burgoyne to annoy General Schuyler, were harassing the country. Several of them burst into the

house of Mrs. O'Neil, sacked and plundered it, and carried off her and Miss McCrea prisoners. In her fright the latter promised the savages a large reward, if they would spare her life and take her in safety to the British camp. It was a fatal promise. Halting at a spring, a quarrel arose among the savages, inflamed most probably with drink, as to whose prize she was, and who was entitled to the reward. The dispute became furious, and one, in a paroxysm of rage, killed her on the spot. He completed the savage act by bearing off her scalp as a trophy.

General Burgoyne was struck with horror when he heard of this bloody deed. What at first heightened the atrocity was a report that the Indians had been sent by Lieutenant Jones to bring Miss McCrea to the camp. This he positively denied, and his denial was believed. Burgoyne summoned a council of the Indian chiefs, in which he insisted that the murderer of Miss McCrea should be given up to receive the reward of his crime. The demand produced a violent agitation. The culprit was a great warrior, a chief, and the "wild honor" of his brother sachems was roused in his behalf. St. Luc took Burgoyne aside and entreated him not to push the matter to extremities; assuring him that, from what was passing among the chiefs, he was sure they and their warriors would all abandon the army, should the delinquent be executed. The British officers also interfered, representing the danger that might accrue should the Indians return through Canada, with their savage resentments awakened, or, what was worse, should they go over to the Americans.

Burgoyne was thus reluctantly brought to spare the offender, but thenceforth made it a rule that no party of Indians should be permitted to go forth on a foray unless

under the conduct of a British officer, or some other competent person, who should be responsible for their behavior.

The mischief to the British cause, however, had been effected. The murder of Miss McCrea resounded throughout the land, counteracting all the benefit anticipated from the terror of Indian hostilities. Those people of the frontiers who had hitherto remained quiet now flew to arms to defend their families and firesides. In their exasperation they looked beyond the savages to their employers. They abhorred an army, which, professing to be civilized, could league itself with such barbarians; and they execrated a government, which, pretending to reclaim them as subjects, could let loose such fiends to desolate their homes.

The blood of this unfortunate girl, therefore, was not shed in vain. Armies sprang up from it. Her name passed as a note of alarm along the banks of the Hudson; it was a rallying word among the Green Mountains of Vermont, and brought down all their hardy yeomanry.*

As Burgoyne advanced to Fort Edward, Schuyler fell

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* The sad story of Miss McCrea, like many other incidents of the Revolution, has been related in such a variety of ways, and so wrought up by tradition, that it is difficult now to get at the simple truth. Some of the above circumstances were derived from a niece of Miss McCrea, whom the author met upward of fifty years ago, at her residence on the banks of the St. Lawrence. A stone, with her name cut on it, still marks the grave of Miss McCrea near the ruins of Fort Edward; and a tree is pointed out near which she was murdered. Lieutenant Jones is said to have been completely broken in spirit by the shock of her death. Procuring her scalp, with its long silken tresses, he brooded over it in anguish, and preserved it as a sad, but precious relic. Disgusted with the service, he threw up his commission and retired to Canada; never marrying, but living to be an old man; taciturn and melancholy, and haunted by painful recollections.

still further back, and took post at Saratoga, or rather Stillwater, about thirty miles from Albany. He had been joined by Major-general Lincoln, who, according to Washington's directions, had hastened to his assistance. In pursuance of Washington's plans, Lincoln proceeded to Manchester in Vermont, to take command of the militia forces collecting at that point. His presence inspired new confidence in the country people, who were abandoning their homes, leaving their crops ungathered, and taking refuge with their families in the lower towns. He found about five hundred militia assembled at Manchester, under Colonel Seth Warner; others were coming on from New Hampshire and Massachusetts, to protect their uncovered frontier. His letters, dated the 4th of August, expressed the expectation of being, in a few days, at the head of at least two thousand men. With these, according to Washington's plan, he was to hang on the flank and rear of Burgoyne's army, cramp its movements, and watch for an opportunity to strike a blow.

Burgoyne was now at Fort Edward. "The enthusiasm of the army, as well as of the general, upon their arrival on the Hudson River, which had been so long the object of their hopes and wishes, may be better conceived than described," says a British writer of the day. The enthusiasm of the general was soon checked, however, by symptoms of ill humor among his Indian allies. They resented his conduct in regard to the affair of Miss McCrea, and were impatient under the restraint to which they were subjected. He suspected the Canadian interpreters of fomenting this discontent; they being accustomed to profit by the rapine of the Indians. At the earnest request of St. Luc, in whom he still had confidence, he called a council of the chiefs; when, to his astonishment, the tribe for whom that gentleman acted

as interpreter declared their intention of returning home, and demanded his concurrence and assistance.

Burgoyne was greatly embarrassed. Should he acquiesce, it would be to relinquish the aid of a force obtained at an immense expense, esteemed in England of great importance, and which really was serviceable in furnishing scouts and outposts; yet he saw that a cordial reconciliation with them could only be effected by revoking his prohibitions, and indulging their propensities to blood and rapine.

To his credit be it recorded, he adhered to what was right and rejected what might be deemed expedient. He refused their proposition, and persisted in the restraints he had imposed upon them, but appealed to the wild honor, of which he yet considered them capable, by urging the ties of faith, of generosity, of everything that has an influence with civilized man. His speech appeared to have a good effect. Some of the remote tribes made zealous professions of loyalty and adhesion. Others, of Lower Canada, only asked furloughs for parties to return home and gather in their harvests. These were readily granted, and perfect harmony seemed restored. The next day, however, the chivalry of the wilderness deserted by scores, laden with such spoil as they had collected in their maraudings. These desertions continued from day to day, until there remained in the camp scarce a vestige of the savage warriors that had joined the army at Skenesborough.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Difficulties of Burgoyne—Plans an Expedition to Bennington—St. Leger before Fort Stanwix—General Herkimer at Oriskany—High Words with his Officers—A Dogged March—An Ambuscade—Battle of Oriskany—Johnson's Greens—Death of Herkimer—Spirited Sortie of Colonel Willett—Sir John Johnson driven to the River—Flight of the Indians—Sacking of Sir John's Camp—Colonel Gansevoort maintains his Post—Colonel Willett sent in quest of Aid—Arrives at Schuyler's Camp

NEW difficulties beset Burgoyne at Fort Edward. The horses which had been contracted for in Canada, for draft, burden, and saddle, arrived slowly and scantily; having to come a long distance through the wilderness. Artillery and munitions, too, of all kinds, had to be brought from Ticonderoga by the way of Lake George. These, with a vast number of boats for freight, or to form bridges, it was necessary to transport over the carrying-places between the lakes; and by land from Fort George to Fort Edward. Unfortunately, the army had not the requisite supply of horses and oxen. So far from being able to bring forward provisions for a march, it was with difficulty enough could be furnished to feed the army from day to day.

While thus situated, Burgoyne received intelligence that the part of his army which he had detached from Canada under Colonel St. Leger, to proceed by Lake Ontario and Oswego and make a diversion on the Mohawk, had penetrated to that river, and were actually investing Fort Stanwix, the stronghold of that part of the country.

To carry out the original plan of his campaign, it now

behooved him to make a rapid move down the Hudson, so as to be at hand to co-operate with St. Leger on his approach to Albany. But how was he to do this, deficient as he was in horses and vehicles for transportation? In this dilemma Colonel (late Major) Skene, the royalist of Skenesborough, to whom, from his knoweldge of all this region, he had of late resorted for counsel, informed him that at Bennington, about twenty-four miles east of the Hudson, the Americans had a great depot of horses, carriages, and supplies of all kinds, intended for their Northern army. This place, he added, might easily be surprised, being guarded by only a small militia force.

An expedition was immediately set on foot; not only to surprise this place, but to scour the country from Rockingham to Otter Creek; go down the Connecticut as far as Brattleborough, and return by the great road to Albany, there to meet Burgoyne. They were to make prisoners of all officers, civil and military, whom they might meet acting under Congress; to tax the towns where they halted with everything they stood in need of, and bring off all horses fit for the dragoons, or for battalion service, with as many saddles and bridles as could be found.

They were everywhere to give out that this was the vanguard of the British army, which would soon follow on its way to Boston, and would be joined by the army from Rhode Island.

Before relating the events of this expedition, we will turn to notice those of the detachment under St. Leger, with which it was intended to co-operate, and which was investing Fort Schuyler.

This fort, built in 1756, on the site of an old French fortification, and formerly called Fort Stanwix, from a British

general of that name, was situated on the right bank of the Mohawk River, at the head of its navigation, and commanding the carrying-place between it and Wood Creek whence the boats passed to the Oneida Lake, the Oswego River, and Lake Ontario. It was thus a key to the intercourse between Upper Canada and the valley of the Mohawk. The fort was square, with four bastions, and was originally a place of strength; having bomb-proof magazines, a deep moat and drawbridge, a sally port, and covered way. In the long interval of peace subsequent to the French war it had fallen to decay. Recently it had been repaired by order of General Schuyler, and had received his name. It was garrisoned by seven hundred and fifty Continental troops from New York and Massachusetts, and was under the command of Colonel Gansevoort of the New York line, a stout-hearted officer of Dutch descent, who had served under General Montgomery in Canada.

It was a motley force which appeared before it; British, Hessian, Royalist, Canadian, and Indian, about seventeen hundred in all. Among them were St. Leger's rangers and Sir John Johnson's royalist corps, called his greens. Many of the latter had followed Sir John into Canada from the valley of the Mohawk, and were now returned to bring the horrors of war among their former neighbors; the Indians, their worthy allies, were led by the famous Brant.

On the 3d of August, St. Leger sent in a flag with a summons to surrender; accompanied by a proclamation in style and spirit similar to that recently issued by Burgoyne, and intended to operate on the garrison. Both his summons and his proclamation were disregarded. He now set his troops to work to fortify his camp and clear obstructions from Wood Creek and the roads, for the transportation of

artillery and provisions, and sent out scouting parties of Indians in all directions, to cut off all communication of the garrison with the surrounding country. A few shells were thrown into the fort. The chief annoyance of the garrison was from the Indians firing with their rifles from behind trees on those busied in repairing the parapets. At night they seemed completely to surround the fort, filling the woods with their yells and howlings.

On the 6th of August three men made their way into the fort through a swamp, which the enemy had deemed impassable. They brought the cheering intelligence that General Herkimer, the veteran commander of the militia of Tryon County, was at Oriskany, about eight miles distant, with upward of eight hundred men. The people of that country were many of them of German origin; some of them Germans by birth. Herkimer was among the former, a large and powerful man, about sixty-five years of age. He requested Colonel Gansevoort, through his two messengers, to fire three signal-guns on receiving word of his vicinage; upon hearing which, he would endeavor to force his way to the fort, depending upon the co-operation of the garrison.

The messengers had been dispatched by Herkimer on the evening of the 5th, and he had calculated that they would reach the fort at a very early hour in the morning. Through some delay, they did not reach it until between ten and eleven o'clock. Gansevoort instantly complied with the message. Three signal-guns were fired, and Colonel Willett, of the New York Continentals, with two hundred and fifty men and an iron three pounder, was detached to make a diversion, by attacking that part of the enemy's camp occupied by Johnson and his royalists.

The delay of the messengers in the night, however, disconcerted the plan of Herkimer. He marshaled his troops by daybreak and waited for the signal-guns. Hour after hour elapsed, but no gun was heard. His officers became impatient of delay, and urged an immediate march. Herkimer represented that they were too weak to force their way to the fort without re-enforcements, or without being sure of co-operation from the garrison, and was still for awaiting the preconcerted signals. High words ensued between him and two of his officers. He had a brother and other relatives among the enemy, and hence there was some doubts of his fidelity; though they subsequently proved to be unmerited. Colonels Cox and Paris were particularly urgent for an advance, and suspicious of the motives for holding back. Paris was a prominent man in Tryon County, and member of the committee of safety, and, in compliance with the wishes of that committee, accompanied Herkimer as his volunteer aid. Losing his temper in the dispute, he accused the latter of being either a tory or a coward. "No," replied the brave old man, "I feel toward you all as a father, and will not lead you into a scrape from which I cannot extricate you." His discretion, however, was overpowered by repeated taunts, and he at length, about nine o'clock, gave the word to march; intimating, however, that those who were the most eager to advance would be the first to run away.

The march was rather dogged and irregular. There was ill-humor between the general and his officers. Colonels Paris and Cox advised him to throw out a reconnoitering party in the advance, but he disregarded their advice, and perhaps, in very opposition to it, neglected so necessary a precaution. About ten o'clock they came to a place where

the road was carried on a causeway of logs across a deep, marshy ravine between high level banks. The main division descended into the ravine, followed by the baggage-wagons. They had scarcely crossed it when enemies suddenly sprang up in front and on each side, with deadly volleys of musketry, and deafening yells and war-whoops. In fact, St. Leger, apprised by his scouts of their intended approach, had sent a force to waylay them. This was composed of a division of Johnson's greens, led by his brother-in-law, Major Watts; a company of rangers under Colonel Butler, a refugee from this neighborhood, and a strong body of Indians under Brant. The troops were stationed in front just beyond the ravine; the Indians along each side of the road. The plan of the ambuscade was to let the van of the Americans pass the ravine and advance between the concealed parties, when the attack was to be commenced by the troops in front, after which the Indians were to fall on the Americans in rear and cut off all retreat.

The savages, however, could not restrain their natural ferocity and hold back as ordered, but discharged their rifles simultaneously with the troops, and instantly rushed forward with spears and tomahawks, yelling like demons, and commencing a dreadful butchery. The rearguard, which had not entered the ravine, retreated. The main body, though thrown into confusion, defended themselves bravely. One of those severe conflicts ensued, common in Indian warfare, where the combatants take post with their rifles, behind rock and tree, or come to deadly struggle with knife and tomahawk.

The veteran Herkimer was wounded early in the action. A musket ball shattered his leg just below the knee, killing his horse at the same time. He made his men place him

on his saddle at the foot of a large beech tree, against the trunk of which he leaned, continuing to give his orders.

The regulars attempted to charge with the bayonet; but the Americans formed themselves in circles back to back, and repelled them. A heavy storm of thunder and rain caused a temporary lull to the fight, during which the patriots changed their ground. Some of them stationed themselves in pairs behind trees; so that when one had fired the other could cover him until he had reloaded; for the savages were apt to rush up with knife and tomahawk the moment a man had discharged his piece. Johnson's greens came up to sustain the Indians, who were giving way, and now was the fiercest part of the fight. Old neighbors met in deadly feud; former intimacy gave bitterness to present hate, and war was literally carried to the knife; for the bodies of combatants were afterward found on the field of battle, grappled in death, with the hand still grasping the knife plunged in a neighbor's heart. The very savages seemed inspired with unusual ferocity by the confusion and death struggle around them, and the sight of their prime warriors and favorite chiefs shot down. In their blind fury they attacked the white men indiscriminately, friend or foe, so that in this chance-medley fight many of Sir John's greens were slain by his own Indian allies.

A confusion reigns over the accounts of this fight; in which every one saw little but what occurred in his immediate vicinity. The Indians, at length, having lost many of their bravest warriors, gave the retreating cry, Oonah! Oonah! and fled to the woods. The greens and rangers, hearing a firing in the direction of the fort, feared an attack upon their camp, and hastened to its defense, carrying off with them many prisoners. The Americans did not pursue

them, but, placing their wounded on litters made of branches of trees, returned to Oriskany. Both parties have claimed the victory; but it does not appear that either was entitled to it. The dead of both parties lay for days unburied on the field of action, and a wounded officer of the enemy (Major Watts) remained there two days unrelieved, until found by an Indian scout. It would seem as if each party gladly abandoned this scene of one of the most savage conflicts of the Revolution. The Americans had two hundred killed, and a number wounded. Several of these were officers. The loss of the enemy is thought to have been equally great as to numbers; but then the difference in value between regulars and militia! the former often the refuse of mankind, mere hirelings, whereas among the privates of the militia, called out from their homes to defend their neighborhood, were many of the worthiest and most valuable of the yeomanry. The premature haste of the Indians in attacking had saved the Americans from being completely surrounded. The rearguard, not having entered the defile, turned and made a rapid retreat, but were pursued by the Indians, and suffered greatly in a running fight. We may add that those who had been most urgent with General Herkimer for this movement were among the first to suffer from it. Colonel Cox was shot down at the first fire, so was a son of Colonel Paris; the colonel himself was taken prisoner, and fell beneath the tomahawk of the famous Red Jacket.

As to General Herkimer, he was conveyed to his residence on the Mohawk River, and died nine days after the battle, not so much from his wound as from bad surgery, sinking gradually through loss of blood from an unskillful amputation. He died like a philosopher and a Christian, smoking his pipe and reading his Bible to the last. His

name has been given to a county in that part of the State.*

The sortie of Colonel Willett had been spirited and successful. He attacked the encampments of Sir John Johnson and the Indians, which were contiguous, and strong detachments of which were absent on the ambuscade. Sir John and his men were driven to the river; the Indians fled to the woods. Willett sacked their camps; loaded wagons with camp equipage, clothing, blankets, and stores of all kinds, seized the baggage and papers of Sir John and of several of his officers, and retreated safely to the fort, just as St. Leger was coming up with a powerful re-enforcement. Five colors, which he had brought away with him as trophies, were displayed under the flag of the fort, while his men gave three cheers from the ramparts.

St. Leger now endeavored to operate on the fears of the garrison. His prisoners, it is said, were compelled to write a letter, giving dismal accounts of the affair of Oriskany, and of the impossibility of getting any succor to the garrison; of the probability that Burgoyne and his army were then before Albany, and advising surrender to prevent inevitable destruction. It is probable they were persuaded, rather than compelled, to write the letter, which took its tone from their own depressed feelings and the misrepresentations of those around them. St. Leger accompanied the letter with warnings that, should the garrison persist in resistance, he would not be able to restrain the fury of the savages; who, though held in check for the present, threatened, if further provoked, to revenge the deaths of their warriors and chiefs by

* Some of the particulars of this action were given to the author by a son of Colonel Paris.

slaughtering the garrison and laying waste the whole valley of the Mohawk.

All this failing to shake the resolution of Gansevoort, St. Leger next issued an appeal to the inhabitants of Tryon County, signed by their old neighbors, Sir John Johnson, Colonel Claus, and Colonel Butler, promising pardon and protection to all who should submit to royal authority, and urging them to send a deputation of their principal men to overcome the mulish obstinacy of the garrison and save the whole surrounding country from Indian ravage and massacre. The people of the county, however, were as little to be moved as the garrison.

St. Leger now began to lose heart. The fort proved more capable of defense than he had anticipated. His artillery was too light, and the ramparts, being of sod, were not easily battered. He was obliged reluctantly to resort to the slow process of sapping and mining, and began to make regular approaches.

Gansevoort, seeing the siege was likely to be protracted, resolved to send to General Schuyler for succor. Colonel Willett volunteered to undertake the perilous errand. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Stockwell, an excellent woodman, who served as a guide. They left the fort on the 10th, after dark, by a sallyport, passed by the British sentinels and close by the Indian camp without being discovered, and made their way through bog, and morass, and pathless forests, and all kinds of risks and hardships, until they reached the German Flats on the Mohawk. Here Willett procured a couple of horses, and by dint of hoof arrived at the camp of General Schuyler at Stillwater. A change had come over the position of that commander four days previous to the arrival of Colonel Willett, as we shall relate in the ensuing chapter.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Schuyler hears of the Affair of Oriskany—Applies for Re-enforcements—His Appeal to the Patriotism of Stark—Schuyler superseded—His Conduct thereupon—Relief sent to Fort Stanwix—Arnold volunteers to conduct it—Change of Encampment—Patriotic Determination of Schuyler—Detachment of the Enemy against Bennington—Germans and their Indian Allies—Baum, the Hessian Leader—Stark in the Field—Mustering of the Militia—A Belligerent Parson—Battle of Bennington—Breyman to the Rescue—Routed—Reception of the News in the Rival Camps—Washington urges New England to follow up the Blow

SCHUYLER was in Albany in the early part of August, making stirring appeals in every direction for re-enforcements. Burgoyne was advancing upon him; he had received news of the disastrous affair of Oriskany, and the death of General Herkimer, and Tryon County was crying to him for assistance. One of his appeals was to the veteran John Stark, the comrade of Putnam in the French war and the battle of Bunker's Hill. He had his farm in the Hampshire Grants, and his name was a tower of strength among the Green Mountain Boys. But Stark was soured with government, and had retired from service, his name having been omitted in the list of promotions. Hearing that he was on a visit to Lincoln's camp at Manchester, Schuyler wrote to that general, "Assure General Stark that I have acquainted Congress of his situation, and that I trust and entreat he will, in the present alarming crisis, waive his right; the greater the sacrifice he makes to his feelings the greater will be the honor due to him for not having suffered

any consideration whatever to come in competition with the weal of his country. Entreat him to march immediately to our army."

Schuyler had instant call to practice the very virtue he was inculcating. He was about to mount his horse on the 10th, to return to the camp at Stillwater, when a dispatch from Congress was put into his hand containing the resolves which recalled him to attend a court of inquiry about the affair of Ticonderoga, and requested Washington to appoint an officer to succeed him.

Schuyler felt deeply the indignity of being thus recalled at a time when an engagement was apparently at hand, but endeavored to console himself with the certainty that a thorough investigation of his conduct would prove how much he was entitled to the thanks of his country. He intimated the same in his reply to Congress; in the meantime, he considered it his duty to remain at his post until his successor should arrive, or some officer in the department be nominated to the command. Returning, therefore, to the camp at Stillwater, he continued to conduct the affairs of the army with unremitting zeal. "Until the country is in safety," said he, "I will stifle my resentment."

His first care was to send relief to Gansevoort and his beleaguered garrison. Eight hundred men were all that he could spare from his army in its present threatened state. A spirited and effective officer was wanted to lead them. Arnold was in camp, recently sent on as an efficient coadjutor, by Washington; he was in a state of exasperation against the government, having just learned that the question of rank had been decided against him in Congress. Indeed, he would have retired instantly from the service, had not Schuyler prevailed on him to remain until the impending

danger was over. It was hardly to be expected that in his irritated mood he would accept the command of the detachment, if offered to him. Arnold, however, was a combustible character. The opportunity of an exploit flashed on his adventurous spirit. He stepped promptly forward and volunteered to lead the enterprise. "No public or private injury or insult," said he, "shall prevail on me to forsake the cause of my injured and oppressed country, until I see peace and liberty restored to her, or nobly die in the attempt." *

After the departure of this detachment, it was unanimously determined, in a council of war of Schuyler and his general officers, that the post at Stillwater was altogether untenable with their actual force; part of the army, therefore, retired to the islands at the fords on the mouth of the Mohawk River, where it empties into the Hudson, and a brigade was posted above the Falls of the Mohawk, called the Cohoes, to prevent the enemy from crossing there. It was considered a strong position, where they could not be attacked without great disadvantage to the assailant.

The feelings of Schuyler were more and more excited as the game of war appeared drawing to a crisis. "I am resolved," writes he to his friend Duane, "to make another sacrifice to my country, and risk the censure of Congress by remaining in this quarter *after* I am relieved, and bringing up the militia to the support of this weak army."

As yet he did not know who was to be his successor in the command. A letter from Duane informed him that General Gates was the man.

Still the noble part of Schuyler's nature was in the ascendant. "Your fears may be up," writes he in reply,

* Letter to Gates. Gates's Papers.

"lest the ill-treatment I have experienced at his hands should so far get the better of my judgment as to embarrass him. Do not, my dear friend, be uneasy on that account. I am incapable of sacrificing my country to a resentment, however just; and I trust I shall give an example of what a good citizen ought to do when he is in my situation."

We will now take a view of occurrences on the right and left of Burgoyne, and show the effect of Schuyler's measures, poorly seconded as they were, in crippling and straitening the invading army. And first we will treat of the expedition against Bennington. This was a central place, whither the live stock was driven from various parts of the Hampshire Grants, and whence the American army derived its supplies. It was a great deposit, also, of grain of various kinds, and of wheel carriages; the usual guard was militia, varying from day to day. Bennington was to be surprised. The country was to be scoured from Rockingham to Otter Creek in quest of provisions for the army, horses and oxen for draft, and horses for the cavalry. All public magazines were to be sacked. All cattle belonging to royalists, and which could be spared by their owners, were to be paid for. All rebel flocks and herds were to be driven away.

Generals Phillips and Riedesel demurred strongly to the expedition, but their counsels were outweighed by those of Colonel Skene, the royalist. He knew, he said, all the country thereabout. The inhabitants were as five to one in favor of the royal cause, and would be prompt to turn out on the first appearance of a protecting army. He was to accompany the expedition, and much was expected from his personal influence and authority.

Lieutenant-colonel Baum was to command the detachment. He had under him, according to Burgoyne, two

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Irving, Vol. Thirteen, p. 527

hundred dismounted dragoons of the regiment of Riedesel, Captain Fraser's marksmen, which were the only British, all the Canadian volunteers, a party of the provincials who perfectly knew the country, one hundred Indians, and two light pieces of cannon. The whole detachment amounted to about five hundred men. The dragoons, it was expected, would supply themselves with horses in the course of the foray; and a skeleton corps of royalists would be filled up by recruits.

The Germans had no great liking for the Indians as fellow campaigners; especially those who had come from Upper Canada under St. Luc. "These savages are heathens, huge, warlike, and enterprising, but wicked as Satan," writes a Hessian officer. "Some say they are cannibals, but I do not believe it; though in their fury they will tear the flesh off their enemies with their teeth. They have a martial air, and their wild ornaments become them."* St. Luc, who commanded them, had been a terror to the English colonists in the French war, and it was intimated that he possessed great treasures of "old English scalps." He and his warriors, however, had disappeared from camp since the affair of Miss McCrea. The present were Indians from Lower Canada.

The choice of German troops for this foray was much sneered at by the British officers. "A corps could not have been found in the whole army," said they, "so unfit for a service requiring rapidity of motion as Riedesel's dragoons. The very hat and sword of one of them weighed nearly as much as the whole equipment of a British soldier. The worst British regiment in the service would march two miles to their one."

* Schlözer's Briefwechsel, Th. iii., Heft xvii.

To be nearer at hand in case assistance should be required, Burgoyne encamped on the east side of the Hudson, nearly opposite Saratoga, throwing over a bridge of boats by which General Fraser, with the advanced guard, crossed to that place. Colonel Baum set out from camp at break of day, on the 13th of August. All that had been predicted of his movements was verified. The badness of the road, the excessive heat of the weather, and the want of carriages and horses, were alleged in excuse; but slow and unapt men ever meet with impediments. Some cattle, carts and wagons were captured at Cambridge; a few horses also were brought in; but the Indians killed or drove off all that fell into their hands, unless they were paid in cash for their prizes. "The country people of these parts," writes the Hessian narrator, "came in crowds to Governor Skene, as he was called, and took the oath of allegiance; but even these faithless people," adds he, "were subsequently our bitterest assailants."

Baum was too slow a man to take a place by surprise. The people of Bennington heard of his approach and were on the alert. The veteran Stark was there with eight or nine hundred troops. During the late alarms the militia of the State had been formed into two brigades, one to be commanded by General William Whipple; Stark had with difficulty been prevailed upon to accept the command of the other, upon the express condition that he should not be obliged to join the main army, but should be left to his own discretion, to make war in his own partisan style, hovering about the enemy in their march through the country, and accountable to none but the authorities of New Hampshire.

General Lincoln had informed Stark of the orders of General Schuyler, that all the militia should repair to Stillwater, but the veteran refused to comply. He had taken up

arms, he said, in a moment of exigency, to defend the neighborhood which would be exposed to the ravages of the enemy, should he leave it, and he held himself accountable solely to the authorities of New Hampshire. This act of insubordination might have involved the doughty but somewhat testy old general in subsequent difficulty had not his sword carved out an ample excuse for him.

Having heard that Indians had appeared at Cambridge, twelve miles to the north of Bennington, on the 13th, he sent out two hundred men under Colonel Gregg in quest of them. In the course of the night he learned that they were mere scouts in advance of a force marching upon Bennington. He immediately rallied his brigade, called out the militia of the neighborhood, and sent off for Colonel Seth Warner (the quondam associate of Ethan Allen) and his regiment of militia, who were with General Lincoln at Manchester.

Lincoln instantly detached them, and Warner and his men marched all night through drenching rain, arriving at Stark's camp in the morning, dripping wet.

Stark left them at Bennington to dry and rest themselves, and then to follow on; in the meantime, he pushed forward with his men to support the party sent out the preceding day, under Gregg, in quest of the Indians. He met them about five miles off, in full retreat, Baum and his force a mile in their rear.

Stark halted and prepared for action. Baum also halted, posted himself on a high ground at a bend of the little river Walloomscoick, and began to intrench himself. Stark fell back a mile, to wait for re-enforcements and draw down Baum from his strong position. A skirmish took place between the advance guards; thirty of Baum's men were killed and two Indian chiefs.

An incessant rain on the 15th prevented an attack on Baum's camp, but there was continual skirmishing. The colonel strengthened his intrenchments, and finding he had a larger force to contend with than he had anticipated, sent off in all haste to Burgoyne for re-enforcements. Colonel Breyman marched off immediately, with five hundred Hessian grenadiers and infantry and two six-pounders, leaving behind him his tents, baggage, and standards. He, also, found the roads so deep, and the horses so bad, that he was nearly two days getting four-and-twenty miles. The tactics of the Hessians were against them. "So foolishly attached were they to forms of discipline," writes a British historian, "that in marching through thickets they stopped ten times an hour to dress their ranks." It was here in fact that they most dreaded the American rifle. "In the open field," said they, "the rebels are not much; but they are redoubtable in the woods." *

In the meantime the more alert and active Americans had been mustering from all quarters to Stark's assistance, with such weapons as they had at hand. During the night of the 15th, Colonel Symonds arrived with a body of Berkshire militia. Among them was a belligerent parson, full of fight, Allen by name, possibly of the bellicose family of the hero of Ticonderoga. "General," cried he, "the people of Berkshire have been often called out to no purpose; if you don't give them a chance to fight now they will never turn out again." "You would not turn out now, while it is dark and raining, would you?" demanded Stark. "Not just now," was the reply. "Well, if the Lord should once more give us sunshine, and I don't give you fighting enough," rejoined the veteran, "I'll never ask you to turn out again."

* Schlözer's Briefwechsel.

On the following morning the sun shone bright, and Stark prepared to attack Baum in his intrenchments; though he had no artillery, and his men, for the most part, had only their ordinary brown firelocks without bayonets. Two hundred of his men, under Colonel Nichols, were detached to the rear of the enemy's left; three hundred, under Colonel Herrick, to the rear of his right; they were to join their forces and attack him in the rear, while Colonels Hubbard and Stickney, with two hundred men, diverted his attention in front.

Colonel Skene and the royalists, when they saw the Americans issuing out of the woods on different sides, persuaded themselves, and endeavored to persuade Baum, that these were the royal people of the country flocking to his standard. The Indians were the first to discover the truth. "The woods are full of Yankees," cried they, and retreated in single file between the troops of Nichols and Herrick, yelling like demons and jingling cow bells. Several of them, however, were killed or wounded as they thus ran the gantlet.

At the first sound of firearms, Stark, who had remained with the main body in camp, mounted his horse and gave the word, *forward!* He had promised his men the plunder of the British camp. The homely speech made by him when in sight of the enemy has often been cited. "Now, my men! There are the redcoats! Before night they must be ours, or Molly Stark will be a widow!" Baum soon found himself assailed on every side, but he defended his works bravely. His two pieces of artillery, advantageously planted, were very effective, and his troops, if slow in march, were steady in action. For two hours the discharge of firearms was said to have been like the constant rattling of the drum. Stark in his dipsatches compared it to a "continued clap of thunder." It was the hottest fight he had ever seen. He in-

spired his men with his own impetuosity. They drove the royalist troops upon the Hessians, and, pressing after them, stormed the works with irresistible fury. A Hessian eye-witness declares that this time the rebels fought with desperation, pressing within eight paces of the loaded cannon to take surer aim at the artillerists. The latter were slain; the cannon captured. The royalists and Canadians took to flight and escaped to the woods. The Germans still kept their ground, and fought bravely until there was not a cartridge left. Baum and his dragoons then took to their broadswords and the infantry to their bayonets, and endeavored to cut their way to a road in the woods, but in vain; many were killed, more wounded, Baum among the number, and all who survived were taken prisoners.*

The victors now dispersed, some to collect booty, some to attend to the wounded, some to guard the prisoners, and some to seek refreshment, being exhausted by hunger and fatigue. At this critical juncture, Breyman's tardy re-enforcement came, making its way heavily and slowly to the scene of action, joined by many of the enemy who had fled. Attempts were made to rally the militia; but they were in complete confusion. Nothing would have saved them from defeat, had not Colonel Seth Warner's corps fortunately arrived from Bennington, fresh from repose, and advanced to meet the enemy, while the others regained their ranks. It was four o'clock in the afternoon when this second action commenced. It was fought from wood to wood and hill to hill, for several miles, until sunset. The last stand of the enemy was at Van Schaick's mill, where, having expended all their ammunition, of which each man had forty rounds,

* Briefe aus America. Schlözer's Briefwechsel, Th. iii., Heft xiii.

they gave way, and retreated, under favor of the night, leaving two field-pieces and all their baggage in the hands of the Americans. Stark ceased to pursue them, lest in the darkness his men should fire upon each other. "Another hour of daylight," said he in his report, "and I should have captured the whole body." The veteran had had a horse shot under him, but escaped without wound or bruise.

Four brass field-pieces, nine hundred dragoon swords, a thousand stand of arms, and four ammunition wagons, were the spoils of this victory. Thirty-two officers, five hundred and sixty-four privates, including Canadians and loyalists, were taken prisoners. The number of slain was very considerable, but could not be ascertained; many having fallen in the woods. The brave but unfortunate Baum did not long survive. The Americans had one hundred killed and wounded.

Burgoyne was awakened in his camp toward daylight of the 17th, by tidings that Colonel Baum had surrendered. Next came word that Colonel Breyman was engaged in severe and doubtful conflict. The whole army was roused, and were preparing to hasten to his assistance, when one report after another gave assurance that he was on his way back in safety. The main body, therefore, remained in camp at the Batten kiln; but Burgoyne forded that stream with the 47th regiment and pushed forward until four o'clock, when he met Breyman and his troops, weary and haggard with hard fighting and hard marching, in hot weather. In the evening all returned to their old encampments.*

General Schuyler was encamped on Van Schaick's Island, at the mouth of the Mohawk River, when a letter from

* Schlözer's Briefwechsel, Th. iii., Heft xiii.

General Lincoln, dated Bennington, Aug. 18, informed him of "the capital blow given the enemy by General Stark." "I trust," replies he, Aug. 19th, "that the severity with which they have been handled will retard General Burgoyne's progress. Part of his force was yesterday afternoon about three miles and a half above Stillwater. If the enemy have entirely left that part of the country you are in, I think it would be advisable for you to move toward Hudson River tending toward Stillwater."

"Governor Clinton," writes he to Stark on the same day, "is coming up with a body of militia, and I trust that after what the enemy have experienced from you, their progress will be retarded, and then we shall see them driven out of this part of the country."

He now hoped to hear that Arnold had raised the siege of Fort Stanwix. "If that takes place," said he, "it will be possible to engage two or three hundred Indians to join this army, and Congress may rest assured that my best endeavors shall not be wanting to accomplish it."

Tidings of the affair of Bennington reached Washington, just before he moved his camp from the neighborhood of Philadelphia to Wilmington, and it relieved his mind from a world of anxious perplexity. In a letter to Putnam he writes, "As there is not now the least danger of General Howe's going to New England, I hope the whole force of that country will turn out, and, by following the great stroke struck by General Stark near Bennington, entirely crush General Burgoyne, who, by his letter to Colonel Baum, seems to be in want of almost everything."

We will now give the fate of Burgoyne's detachment, under St. Leger, sent to capture Fort Stanwix and ravage the valley of the Mohawk.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Stratagem of Arnold to relieve Fort Stanwix—Yan Yost Cuyler—The Siege pressed—Indians intractable—Success of Arnold's Stratagem—Harassed Retreat of St. Leger—Moral Effect of the two Blows given to the Enemy—Brightening Prospects in the American Camp—Arrival of Gates—Magnanimous Conduct of Schuyler—Poorly requited by Gates—Correspondence between Gates and Burgoyne concerning the Murder of Miss McCrea

ARNOLD'S march to the relief of Fort Stanwix was slower than suited his ardent and impatient spirit. He was detained in the valley of the Mohawk by bad roads, by the necessity of waiting for baggage and ammunition wagons, and for militia recruits who turned out reluctantly. He sent missives to Colonel Gansevoort assuring him that he would relieve him in the course of a few days. "Be under no kind of apprehension," writes he. "I know the strength of the enemy, and *how to deal with them.*"

In fact, conscious of the smallness of his force, he had resorted to stratagem, sending emissaries ahead to spread exaggerated reports of the number of his troops, so as to work on the fears of the enemy's Indian allies and induce them to desert. The most important of these emissaries was one Yan Yost Cuyler, an eccentric, half-witted fellow, known throughout the country as a rank tory. He had been convicted as a spy, and only spared from the halter on the condition that he would go into St. Leger's camp, and spread alarming reports among the Indians, by whom he was well

known. To insure a faithful discharge of his mission, Arnold detained his brother as a hostage.

On his way up the Mohawk valley, Arnold was joined by a New York regiment, under Colonel James Livingston, sent by Gates to re-enforce him. On arriving at the German Flats he received an express from Colonel Gansevoort, informing him that he was still besieged, but in high spirits and under no apprehensions. In a letter to Gates, written from the German Flats (August 21st), Arnold says, "I leave this place this morning with twelve hundred Continental troops and a handful of militia for Fort Schuyler, still besieged by a number equal to ours. You will hear of my being victorious—or no more. As soon as the safety of this part of the country will permit, I will fly to your assistance." *

All this while St. Leger was advancing his parallels and pressing the siege; while provisions and ammunition were rapidly decreasing within the fort. St. Leger's Indian allies, however, were growing sullen and intractable. This slow kind of warfare, this war with the spade, they were unaccustomed to, and they by no means relished it. Besides, they had been led to expect easy times, little fighting, many scalps, and much plunder; whereas they had fought hard, lost many of their best chiefs, been checked in their cruelty, and gained no booty.

At this juncture, scouts brought word that a force one thousand strong was marching to the relief of the fort. Eager to put his savages in action, St. Leger, in a council of war, offered to their chiefs to place himself at their head, with three hundred of his best troops, and meet the enemy

* Gates's Papers.

as they advanced. It was agreed, and they sallied forth together to choose a fighting ground. By this time rumors stole into the camp doubling the number of the approaching enemy. Burgoyne's whole army were said to have been defeated. Lastly came Yan Yost Cuyler, with his coat full of bullet holes, giving out that he had escaped from the hands of the Americans, and had been fired upon by them. His story was believed, for his wounded coat corroborated it, and he was known to be a royalist. Mingling among his old acquaintances, the Indians, he assured them that the Americans were close at hand, "and numerous as the leaves on the trees."

Arnold's stratagem succeeded. The Indians, fickle as the winds, began to desert. Sir John Johnson and Colonels Claus and Butler endeavored in vain to reassure and retain them. In a little while two hundred had decamped, and the rest threatened to do so likewise, unless St. Leger retreated.

The unfortunate colonel found too late what little reliance was to be placed upon Indian allies. He determined, on the 22d, to send off his sick, his wounded, and his artillery by Wood Creek that very night, and to protect them by the line of march. The Indians, however, goaded on by Arnold's emissaries, insisted on instant retreat. St. Leger still refused to depart before nightfall. The savages now became ungovernable. They seized upon liquor of the officers about to be embarked, and getting intoxicated, behaved like very fiends.

In a word, St. Leger was obliged to decamp about noon, in such hurry and confusion that he left his tents standing, and his artillery, with most of his baggage, ammunition, and stores, fell into the hands of the Americans.

A detachment from the garrison pursued and harassed

him for a time; but his greatest annoyance was from his Indian allies, who plundered the boats which conveyed such baggage as had been brought off; murdered all stragglers who lagged in the rear, and amused themselves by giving false alarms to keep up the panic of the soldiery; who would throw away muskets, knapsacks, and everything that impeded their flight.

It was not until he reached Onondaga Falls that St. Leger discovered, by a letter from Burgoyne, and floating reports brought by the bearer, that he had been the dupe of a *ruse de guerre*, and that at the time the advancing foe were reported to be close upon his haunches they were not within forty miles of him.

Such was the second blow to Burgoyne's invading army; but before the news of it reached that doomed commander he had already been half paralyzed by the disaster at Bennington.

The moral effect of these two blows was such as Washington had predicted. Fortune, so long adverse, seemed at length to have taken a favorable turn. People were roused from their despondency. There was a sudden exultation throughout the country. The savages had disappeared in their native forests. The German veterans, so much vaunted and dreaded, had been vanquished by militia, and British artillery captured by men, some of whom had never seen a cannon.

Means were now augmenting in Schuyler's hands. Colonels Livingston and Pierre van Courtlandt, forwarded by Putnam, were arrived. Governor Clinton was daily expected with New York militia from the Highlands. The arrival of Arnold was anticipated with troops and artillery, and Lincoln with the New England militia. At this propi-

tious moment, when everything was ready for the sickle to be put into the harvest, General Gates arrived in the camp.

Schuyler received him with the noble courtesy to which he pledged himself. After acquainting him with all the affairs of the department, the measures he had taken, and those he had projected, he informed him of his having signified to Congress his intention to remain in that quarter for the present, and render every service in his power; and he entreated Gates to call upon him for counsel and assistance whenever he thought proper.

Gates was in high spirits. His letters to Washington show how completely he was aware that an easy path of victory had been opened for him. "Upon my leaving Philadelphia," writes he, "the prospect this way appeared most gloomy, but the severe checks the enemy have met with at Bennington and Tryon County have given a more pleasing view of public affairs. Particular accounts of the signal victory gained by General Stark, and of the severe blow General Herkimer gave Sir John Johnson and the scalpers under his command, have been transmitted to your Excellency by General Schuyler. I anxiously expect the arrival of an express from General Arnold, with an account of the total defeat of the enemy in that quarter.

"I cannot sufficiently thank your Excellency for sending Colonel Morgan's corps to this army. They will be of the greatest service to it; for, until the late success this way, I am told the army were quite panicstruck by the Indians, and their tory and Canadian assassins in Indian dress."

Governor Clinton was immediately expected in camp, and he intended to consult with him and General Lincoln upon the best plan to distress, and, he hoped, finally to defeat the enemy. "We shall, no doubt," writes he, "unani-

mously agree in sentiment with your Excellency to keep Generals Lincoln and Stark upon the flank and rear of the enemy, while the main body opposes them in front."

Not a word does he say of consulting Schuyler, who, more than any one else, was acquainted with the department and its concerns, who was in constant correspondence with Washington, and had co-operated with him in effecting the measures which had produced the present promising situation of affairs. So far was he from responding to Schuyler's magnanimity, and profiting by his nobly offered counsel and assistance, that he did not even ask him to be present at his first council of war, although he invited up General Ten Broeck, of the militia from Albany, to attend it.

His conduct in this respect provoked a caustic remark from the celebrated Gouverneur Morris. "The commander-in-chief of the Northern department," said he, "may, if he please, neglect to ask or disdain to receive advice, but those who know him will, I am sure, be convinced that he wants it."

Gates opened hostilities against Burgoyne with the pen. He had received a letter from that commander, complaining of the harsh treatment experienced by the royalists captured at Bennington. "Duty and principle," writes Burgoyne, "made me a public enemy to the Americans who have taken up arms; but I seek to be a generous one; nor have I the shadow of resentment against any individual who does not induce it by acts derogatory to those maxims upon which all men of honor think alike."

There was nothing in this that was not borne out by the conduct and character of Burgoyne; but Gates seized upon the occasion to assail that commander in no measured terms in regard to his Indian allies.

"That the savages," said he, "should in their warfare mangle the unhappy prisoners who fall into their hands, is neither new nor extraordinary; but that the famous General Burgoyne, in whom the fine gentleman is united with the scholar, should hire the savages of America to scalp Europeans; nay more, that he should pay a price for each scalp so barbarously taken, is more than will be believed in Europe, until authenticated facts shall in every gazette confirm the horrid tale."

After this prelude, he went on to state the murder of Miss McCrea, alleging that her murderer was employed by Burgoyne. "Two parents," added he, "with their six children were treated with the same inhumanity, while quietly resting in their once happy and peaceful dwelling. Upward of one hundred men, women and children have perished by the hands of the ruffians to whom it is asserted you have paid the price of blood."

Gates showed his letter to General Lincoln and Colonel Wilkinson, who demurred to its personality; but he evidently conceived it an achievement of the pen, and spurned their criticism.* Burgoyne, in a manly reply, declared that he would have disdained to justify himself from such rhapsodies of fiction and calumny, but that his silence might be construed into an admission of their truth, and lead to acts of

* After General Gates had written his letter to Burgoyne, he called General Lincoln and myself into his apartment, read it to us, and requested our opinion of it, which we declined giving; but being pressed by him, with diffidence we concurred in judgment, that he had been too personal; to which the old gentleman replied with his characteristic bluntness, "By G—! I don't believe either of you can mend it": and thus the consultation terminated.—Wilkinson's Memoirs, vol. i., p. 231.

retaliation. He pronounced all the intelligence cited respecting the cruelties of the Indians to be false, with the exception of the case of Miss McCrea. This he put in its true light, adding that it had been as sincerely lamented and abhorred by him as it could be by the tenderest of her friends. "I would not," declared he, "be conscious of the acts you presume to impute to me, for the whole continent of America; though the wealth of worlds was in its bowels, and a paradise upon its surface."

We have already shown what was the real conduct of Burgoyne in this deplorable affair, and General Gates could and should have ascertained it, before "he presumed to impute" to a gallant antagonist and a humane and cultivated gentleman such base and barbarous policy. It was the government under which Burgoyne served that was chargeable with the murderous acts of the savages. He is rather to be pitied for being obliged to employ such hell-hounds, whom he endeavored in vain to hold in check. Great Britain reaped the reward of her policy in the odium which it cast upon her cause, and the determined and successful opposition which it provoked in the American bosom.

We will now shift the scene to Washington's camp at Wilmington, where we left him watching the operations of the British fleet, and preparing to oppose the army under Sir William Howe in its designs upon Philadelphia.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Landing of Howe's Army on Elk River—Measures to check it—Exposed Situation of Washington in Reconnoitering—Alarm of the Country—Proclamation of Howe—Arrival of Sullivan—Foreign Officers in Camp—Deborre—Conway—Fleury—Count Pulaski—First Appearance in the Army of "Light-Horse Harry" of Virginia—Washington's Appeal to the Army—Movements of the Rival Forces—Battle of the Brandywine—Retreat of the Americans—Halt in Chester—Scenes in Philadelphia during the Battle—Congress orders out Militia—Clothes Washington with Extraordinary Powers—Removes to Lancaster—Rewards to Foreign Officers

On the 25th of August, the British army under General Howe began to land from the fleet in Elk River, at the bottom of Chesapeake Bay. The place where they landed was about six miles below the Head of Elk (now Elkton), a small town, the capital of Cecil County. This was seventy mile, from Philadelphia; ten miles further from that city than they had been when encamped at Brunswick. The intervening country, too, was less open than the Jerseys, and cut up by deep streams. Sir William had chosen this circuitous route in the expectation of finding friends among the people of Cecil County, and of the lower counties of Pennsylvania, many of whom were Quakers and non-combatants, and many persons disaffected to the patriot cause.

Early in the evening, Washington received intelligence that the enemy were landing. There was a quantity of public and private stores at the Head of Elk, which he feared would fall into their hands if they moved quickly. Every

attempt was to be made to check them. The divisions of Generals Greene and Stephen were within a few miles of Wilmington; orders were sent for them to march thither immediately. The two other divisions, which had halted at Chester to refresh, were to hurry forward. Major-general Armstrong, the same who had surprised the Indian village of Kittanning in the French war, and who now commanded the Pennsylvania militia, was urged to send down, in the cool of night, all the men he could muster, properly armed. "The first attempt of the enemy," writes Washington, "will be with light parties to seize horses, carriages, and cattle, and we must endeavor to check them at the outset."

General Rodney, therefore, who commanded the Delaware militia, was ordered to throw out scouts and patrols toward the enemy to watch their motions, and to move near them with his troops as soon as he should be re-enforced by the Maryland militia.

Light troops were sent out early in the morning to hover about and harass the invaders. Washington himself, accompanied by General Greene and the Marquis de Lafayette and their aides, rode forth to reconnoiter the country in the neighborhood of the enemy, and determine how to dispose of his forces when they should be collected. The only eminences near Elk were Iron Hill and Gray's Hill; the latter within two miles of the enemy. It was difficult, however, to get a good view of their encampment and judge of the number that had landed. Hours were passed in riding from place to place reconnoitering and taking a military survey of the surrounding country. At length a severe storm drove the party to take shelter in a farmhouse. Night came on dark and stormy. Washington showed no disposition to depart. His companions became alarmed for his safety; there was

risk of his being surprised, being so near the enemy's camp. He was not to be moved either by advice or entreaties, but remained all night under the farmer's roof. When he left the house at daybreak, however, says Lafayette, he acknowledged his imprudence, and that the most insignificant traitor might have caused his ruin.

Indeed, he ran a similar risk to that which, in the previous year, had produced General Lee's catastrophe.

The country was in a great state of alarm. The inhabitants were hurrying off their most valuable effects, so that it was difficult to procure cattle and vehicles to remove the public stores. The want of horses and the annoyances given by the American light troops, however, kept Howe from advancing promptly, and gave time for the greater part of the stores to be saved.

To allay the public alarm, Howe issued a proclamation on the 27th, promising the strictest regularity and order on the part of his army; with security of person and property to all who remained quietly at home, and pardon to those under arms who should promptly return to their obedience. The proclamation had a quieting effect, especially among the loyalists, who abounded in these parts.

The divisions of Generals Greene and Stephen were now stationed several miles in advance of Wilmington, behind White Clay Creek, about ten miles from the Head of Elk. General Smallwood and Colonel Gist had been directed by Congress to take command of the militia of Maryland, who were gathering on the western shore, and Washington sent them orders to co-operate with General Rodney and get in the rear of the enemy.

Washington now felt the want of Morgan and his riflemen, whom he had sent to assist the Northern army; to

supply their place, he formed a corps of light troops by drafting a hundred men from each brigade. The command was given to Major-general Maxwell, who was to hover about the enemy and give them continual annoyance.

The army about this time was increased by the arrival of General Sullivan and his division of three thousand men. He had recently, while encamped at Hanover in Jersey, made a gallant attempt to surprise and capture a corps of one thousand provincials stationed on Staten Island, at a distance from the fortified camp, and opposite the Jersey shore. The attempt was partially successful; a number of the provincials were captured; but the regulars came to the rescue. Sullivan had not brought sufficient boats to secure a retreat. His rearguard was captured while waiting for the return of the boats, yet not without a sharp resistance. There was loss on both sides, but the Americans suffered most. Congress had directed Washington to appoint a court of inquiry to investigate the matter; in the meantime Sullivan, whose gallantry remained undoubted, continued in command.

There were now in camp several of those officers and gentlemen from various parts of Europe who had recently pressed into the service, and the suitable employment of whom had been a source of much perplexity to Washington. General Deborre, the French veteran of thirty years' service, commanded a brigade in Sullivan's division. Brigadier-general Conway, the Gallicized Hibernian, was in the division of Lord Stirling. Besides these, there was Louis Fleury, a French gentleman of noble descent, who had been educated as an engineer, and had come out at the opening of the Revolution to offer his services. Washington had obtained for him a captain's commission. Another officer of distin-

guished merit was the Count Pulaski, a Pole, recommended by Dr. Franklin as an officer famous throughout Europe for his bravery and conduct in the defense of the liberties of his country against Russia, Austria, and Prussia. In fact, he had been commander-in-chief of the forces of the insurgents. He served at present as a volunteer in the light-horse, and as that department was still without a head, and the cavalry was a main object of attention among the military of Poland, Washington suggested to Congress the expediency of giving him the command of it. "This gentleman, we are told," writes Washington, "has been, like us, engaged in defending the liberty and independence of his country, and has sacrificed his fortunes to his zeal for those objects. He derives from hence a title to our respect that ought to operate in his favor as far as the good of the service will permit."

At this time Henry Lee of Virginia, of military renown, makes his first appearance. He was in the twenty-second year of his age, and in the preceding year had commanded a company of Virginia volunteers. He had recently signalized himself in scouting parties, harassing the enemy's pickets. Washington, in a letter to the President of Congress (August 30th), writes: "This minute twenty-four British prisoners arrived, taken yesterday by Captain Lee of the light-horse." His adventurous exploits soon won him notoriety, and the popular appellation of "Light-horse Harry." He was favorably noticed by Washington throughout the war. Perhaps there was something besides his bold, dashing spirit which won him this favor. There may have been early recollections connected with it. Lee was the son of the lady who first touched Washington's heart in his school-boy days, the one about whom he wrote rhymes at Mount Vernon and Greenway Court—his "lowland beauty."

Several days were now passed by the commander-in-chief almost continually in the saddle, reconnoitering the roads and passes, and making himself acquainted with the surrounding country; which was very much intersected by rivers and small streams, running chiefly from northwest to southeast. He had now made up his mind to risk a battle in the open field. It is true his troops were inferior to those of the enemy in number, equipments, and discipline. Hitherto, according to Lafayette, "they had fought combats, but not battles." Still those combats had given them experience; and though many of them were militia, or raw recruits, yet the divisions of the army had acquired a facility at moving in large masses, and were considerably improved in military tactics. At any rate, it would never do to let Philadelphia, at that time the capital of the States, fall without a blow. There was a carping spirit abroad; a disposition to cavil and find fault, which was prevalent in Philadelphia and creeping into Congress; something of the nature of what had been indulged respecting General Schuyler and the army of the North. Public impatience called for a battle; it was expected even by Europe; his own valiant spirit required it; though hitherto he had been held in check by superior considerations of expediency, and by the controlling interference of Congress. Congress itself now spurred him on, and he gave way to the native ardor of his character.

The British army having effected a landing, in which, by the way, it had experienced but little molestation, was formed into two divisions. One, under Sir William Howe, was stationed at Elkton, with its advanced guard at Gray's Hill, about two miles off. The other division, under General Knyphausen, was on the opposite side of the ferry, at Cecil Court House. On the third of September the enemy ad-

vanced in considerable force, with three field-pieces, moving with great caution, as the country was difficult, woody, and not well known to them. About three miles in front of White Clay Creek their vanguard was encountered by General Maxwell and his light troops, and a severe skirmish took place. The fire of the American sharpshooters and riflemen, as usual, was very effective; but being inferior in number, and having no artillery, Maxwell was compelled to retreat across White Clay Creek, with the loss of about forty killed and wounded. The loss of the enemy was supposed to be much greater.

The main body of the American army was now encamped on the east side of Red Clay Creek, on the road leading from Elkton to Philadelphia. The light infantry were in the advance, at White Clay Creek. The armies were from eight to ten miles apart. In this position, Washington determined to await the threatened attack.

On the 5th of September he made a stirring appeal to the army, in his general orders, stating the object of the enemy, the capture of Philadelphia. They had tried it before from the Jerseys, and had failed. He trusted they would be again disappointed. In their present attempt their all was at stake. The whole would be hazarded in a single battle.. If defeated in that, they were totally undone, and the war would be at an end. Now then was the time for the most strenuous exertions. One bold stroke would free the land from rapine, devastation, and brutal outrage. "Two years," said he, "have we maintained the war, and struggled with difficulties innumerable, but the prospect has brightened. Now is the time to reap the fruit of all our toils and dangers; if we behave like men this third campaign will be our last." Washington's numerical force at this time was about fifteen

thousand men, but from sickness and other causes the effective force, militia included, did not exceed eleven thousand, and most of these indifferently armed and equipped. The strength of the British was computed at eighteen thousand men; but, it is thought, not more than fifteen thousand were brought into action.

On the 8th, the enemy advanced in two columns; one appeared preparing to attack the Americans in front, while the other extended its left up the west side of the creek, halting at Milltown, somewhat to the right of the American position. Washington now suspected an intention on the part of Sir William Howe to march by his right, suddenly pass the Brandywine, gain the heights north of that stream, and cut him off from Philadelphia. He summoned a council of war, therefore, that evening, in which it was determined immediately to change their position, and move to the river in question. By two o'clock in the morning, the army was under march, and by the next evening was encamped on the high grounds in the rear of the Brandywine. The enemy on the same evening moved to Kennet Square, about seven miles from the American position.

The Brandywine Creek, as it is called, commences with two branches, called the East and West branches, which unite in one stream, flowing from west to east about twenty-two miles, and emptying itself into the Delaware about twenty-five miles below Philadelphia. It has several fords; one called Chadd's Ford was, at that time, the most practicable, and in the direct route from the enemy's camp to Philadelphia. As the principal attack was expected here, Washington made it the center of his position, where he stationed the main body of his army, composed of Wayne's, Weedon's, and Muhlenberg's brigades, with the light infantry under

Maxwell. An eminence immediately above the ford had been intrenched in the night, and was occupied by Wayne and Proctor's artillery. Weedon's and Muhlenberg's brigades, which were Virginian troops, and formed General Greene's division, were posted in the rear on the heights, as a reserve to aid either wing of the army. With these Washington took his stand. Maxwell's light infantry were thrown in the advance, south of the Brandywine, and posted on high ground each side of the road leading to the ford.

The right wing of the army commanded by Sullivan, and composed of his division and those of Stephen and Stirling, extended up the Brandywine two miles beyond Washington's position. Its light troops and videttes were distributed quite up to the forks. A few detachments of ill-organized and undisciplined cavalry extended across the creek on the extreme right. The left wing, composed of the Pennsylvania militia, under Major-general Amstrong, was stationed about a mile and a half below the main body, to protect the lower fords, where the least danger was apprehended. The Brandywine, which ran in front of the whole line, was now the only obstacle, if such it might be called, between the two armies.

Early on the morning of the 11th, a great column of troops was descried advancing on the road leading to Chadd's Ford. A skirt of woods concealed its force, but it was supposed to be the main body of the enemy; if so, a general conflict was at hand.

The Americans were immediately drawn out in order of battle. Washington rode along the front of the ranks, and was everywhere received with acclamations. A sharp firing of small arms soon told that Maxwell's light infantry were engaged with the vanguard of the enemy. The skirmishing was kept up for some time with spirit, when Maxwell was

driven across the Brandywine below the ford. The enemy, who had advanced but slowly, did not attempt to follow, but halted on commanding ground, and appeared to reconnoiter the American position with a view to an attack. A heavy cannonading commenced on both sides, about ten o'clock. The enemy made repeated dispositions to force the ford, which brought on as frequent skirmishes on both sides of the river, for detachments of the light troops occasionally crossed over. One of these skirmishes was more than usually severe: the British flank-guard was closely pressed, a captain and ten or fifteen men were killed, and the guard was put to flight; but a large force came to their assistance, and the Americans were again driven across the stream. All this while there was the noise and uproar of a battle, but little of the reality. The enemy made a great thundering of cannon, but no vigorous onset, and Colonel Harrison, Washington's "old secretary," seeing this cautious and dilatory conduct on their part, wrote a hurried note to Congress, expressing his confident belief that the enemy would be repulsed.

Toward noon came an express from Sullivan, with a note received from a scouting party, reporting that General Howe, with a large body of troops and a park of artillery, was pushing up the Lancaster road, doubtless to cross at the upper fords and turn the right flank of the American position.

Startled by this information, Washington instantly sent off Colonel Theodoric Bland, with a party of horse, to reconnoiter above the forks and ascertain the truth of the report. In the meantime, he resolved to cross the ford, attack the division in front of him with his whole force, and rout it before the other could arrive. He gave orders for both wings to co-operate, when, as Sullivan was preparing to cross,

Major Spicer of the militia rode up, just from the forks, and assured him there was no enemy in that quarter. Sullivan instantly transmitted the intelligence to Washington, whereupon the movement was suspended until positive information could be obtained. After a time came a man of the neighborhood, Thomas Cheyney by name, spurring in all haste, the mare he rode in foam, and himself out of breath. Dashing up to the commander-in-chief, he informed him that he must instantly move or he would be surrounded. He had come upon the enemy unawares; had been pursued and fired upon, but the fleetness of his mare had saved him. The main body of the British was coming down on the east side of the stream and was near at hand. Washington replied that, from information just received, it could not be so. "You are mistaken, general," replied the other vehemently; "my life for it, you are mistaken." Then reiterating the fact with an oath, and making a draft of the road in the sand, "put me under guard," added he, "until you find my story true."

Another dispatch from Sullivan corroborated it. Colonel Bland, whom Washington had sent to reconnoiter above the forks, had seen the enemy two miles in the rear of Sullivan's right, marching down at a rapid rate, while a cloud of dust showed that there were more troops behind them.

In fact, the old Long Island stratagem had been played over again. Knyphausen with a small division had engrossed the attention of the Americans by a feigned attack at Chadd's Ford, kept up with great noise and prolonged by skirmishes; while the main body of the army under Cornwallis, led by experienced guides, had made a circuit of seventeen miles, crossed the two forks of the Brandywine and arrived in the neighborhood of Birmingham meeting-

house, two miles to the right of Sullivan. It was a capital stratagem, secretly and successfully conducted.

Finding that Cornwallis had thus gained the rear of the army, Washington sent orders to Sullivan to oppose him with the whole right wing, each brigade attacking as soon as it arrived upon the ground. Wayne, in the meantime, was to keep Knyphausen at bay at the ford, and Greene, with the reserve, to hold himself ready to give aid wherever required.

Lafayette, as a volunteer, had hitherto accompanied the commander-in-chief, but now, seeing there was likely to be warm work with the right wing, he obtained permission to join Sullivan; and spurred off with his aid-de-camp to the scene of action. From his narrative, we gather some of the subsequent details.

Sullivan, on receiving Washington's orders, advanced with his own, Stephen's, and Stirling's divisions, and began to form a line in front of an open piece of wood. The time which had been expended in transmitting intelligence, receiving orders, and marching, had enabled Cornwallis to choose his ground and prepare for action. Still more time was given him from the apprehension of the three generals, upon consultation, of being out-flanked upon the right; and that the gap between Sullivan's and Stephen's divisions was too wide and should be closed up. Orders were accordingly given for the whole line to move to the right; and while in execution, Cornwallis advanced rapidly with his troops in the finest order and opened a brisk fire of musketry and artillery. The Americans made an obstinate resistance, but being taken at a disadvantage, the right and left wings were broken and driven into the woods. The center stood firm for a while, but being exposed to the whole fire of the enemy,

gave way at length also. The British, in following up their advantage, got entangled in the wood. It was here that Lafayette received his wound. He had thrown himself from his horse and was endeavoring to rally the troops when he was shot through the leg with a musket-ball, and had to be assisted into the saddle by his aid-de-camp.

The Americans rallied on a height to the north of Dilworth, and made a still more spirited resistance than at first, but were again dislodged and obliged to retreat with a heavy loss.

While this was occurring with the right wing, Knyphausen, as soon as he learned from the heavy firing that Cornwallis was engaged, made a push to force his way across Chadd's Ford in earnest. He was vigorously opposed by Wayne with Proctor's artillery, aided by Maxwell and his infantry. Greene was preparing to second him with the reserve, when he was summoned by Washington to the support of the right wing; which the commander-in-chief had found in imminent peril.

Greene advanced to the relief with such celerity that it is said on good authority his division accomplished the march, or rather run, of five miles, in less than fifty minutes. He arrived too late to save the battle, but in time to protect the broken masses of the left wing, which he met in full flight. Opening his ranks from time to time for the fugitives, and closing them the moment they had passed, he covered their retreat by a sharp and well-directed fire from his field-pieces. His grand stand was made at a place about a mile beyond Dilworth, which, in reconnoitering the neighborhood, Washington had pointed out to him as well calculated for a second position, should the army be driven out of the first; and here he was overtaken by Colonel Pinckney, an aid-de-camp of

the commander-in-chief, ordering him to occupy this position and protect the retreat of the army. The orders were implicitly obeyed. Weedon's brigade was drawn up in a narrow defile, flanked on both sides by woods, and perfectly commanding the road; while Greene, with Muhlenberg's brigade, passing to the right, took his station on the road. The British came on impetuously, expecting but faint opposition. They met with a desperate resistance and were repeatedly driven back. It was the bloody conflict of the bayonet; deadly on either side, and lasting for a considerable time. Weedon's brigade on the left maintained its stand also with great obstinacy, and the check given to the enemy by these two brigades allowed time for the broken troops to retreat. Weedon's was at length compelled by superior numbers to seek the protection of the other brigade, which he did in good order, and Greene gradually drew off the whole division in face of the enemy, who, checked by this vigorous resistance, and seeing the day far spent, gave up all further pursuit.

The brave stand made by these brigades had, likewise, been a great protection to Wayne. He had for a long time withstood the attacks of the enemy at Chadd's Ford, until the approach, on the right, of some of the enemy's troops who had been entangled in the woods, showed him that the right wing had been routed. He now gave up the defense of his post, and retreated by the Chester road. Knyphausen's troops were too fatigued to pursue him; and the others had been kept back, as we have shown, by Greene's division. So ended the varied conflict of the day.

Lafayette gives an animated picture of the general retreat, in which he became entangled. He had endeavored to rejoin Washington, but loss of blood compelled him to stop and

have his wound bandaged. While thus engaged, he came near being captured. All round him was headlong terror and confusion. Chester road, the common retreat of the broken fragments of the army, from every quarter, was crowded with fugitives, with cannon, with baggage cars, all hurrying forward pell-mell, and obstructing each other; while the thundering of cannon, and volleying of musketry by the contending parties in the rear, added to the confusion and panic of the flight.

The dust, the uproar, and the growing darkness, threw everything into chaos; there was nothing but a headlong struggle forward. At Chester, however, twelve miles from the field of battle, there was a deep stream with a bridge, over which the fugitives would have to pass. Here Lafayette set a guard to prevent their further flight. The commander-in-chief, arriving soon after with Greene and his gallant division, some degree of order was restored, and the whole army took its post behind Chester for the night.

The scene of this battle, which decided the fate of Philadelphia, was within six and twenty miles of that city, and each discharge of cannon could be heard there. The two parties of the inhabitants, whig and tory, were to be seen in separate groups in the squares and public places, waiting the event in anxious silence. At length a courier arrived. His tidings spread consternation among the friends of liberty. Many left their homes, entire families abandoned everything in terror and despair, and took refuge in the mountains. Congress, that same evening, determined to quit the city and repair to Lancaster, whence they subsequently removed to Yorktown. Before leaving Philadelphia, however, they summoned the militia of Pennsylvania, and the adjoining States, to join the main army without delay; and ordered

down fifteen hundred Continental troops from Putnam's command on the Hudson. They also clothed Washington with power to suspend officers for misbehavior; to fill up all vacancies under the rank of brigadiers; to take all provisions, and other articles necessary for the use of the army, paying, or giving certificates for the same; and to remove, or secure for the benefit of the owners, all goods and effects which might otherwise fall into the hands of the enemy and be serviceable to them. These extraordinary powers were limited to the circumference of seventy miles round headquarters, and were to continue in force sixty days, unless sooner revoked by Congress.

It may be as well here to notice in advance the conduct of Congress toward some of the foreigners who had mingled in this battle. Count Pulaski, the Polish nobleman, heretofore mentioned, who acted with great spirit as a volunteer in the light horse, riding up within pistol shot of the enemy to reconnoiter, was given a command of cavalry with the rank of brigadier-general. Captain Louis Fleury, also, who had acquitted himself with gallantry, and rendered essential aid in rallying the troops, having had a horse killed under him, was presented by Congress with another, as a testimonial of their sense of his merit.

Lafayette speaks, in his Memoirs, of the brilliant manner in which General Conway, the chevalier of St. Louis, acquitted himself at the head of eight hundred men, in the encounter with the troops of Cornwallis near Birmingham meeting-house. The veteran Deborre was not equally fortunate in gaining distinction on this occasion. In the awkward change of position in the line when in front of the enemy, he had been the first to move, and without waiting for orders. The consequence was, his brigade fell into con-

fusion, and was put to flight. He endeavored to rally it, and was wounded in the attempt; but his efforts were in vain. Congress ordered a court of inquiry on his conduct, whereupon he resigned his commission and returned to France, complaining bitterly of his hard treatment. "It was not his fault," he said, "if American troops would run away."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

General Howe neglects to pursue his Advantage—Washington Retreats to Germantown—Recrosses the Schuylkill and prepares for another Action—Prevented by Storms of Rain—Retreats to French Creek—Wayne detached to fall on the Enemy's Rear—His Pickets surprised—Massacre of Wayne's Men—Maneuvers of Howe on the Schuylkill—Washington sends for Re-enforcements—Howe marches into Philadelphia

NOTWITHSTANDING the rout and precipitate retreat of the American army, Sir William Howe did not press the pursuit, but passed the night on the field of battle, and remained the two following days at Dilworth, sending out detachments to take post at Concord and Chester, and seize on Wilmington, whither the sick and wounded were conveyed. "Had the enemy marched directly to Derby," observes Lafayette, "the American army would have been cut up and destroyed; they lost a precious night, and it is perhaps the greatest fault in a war in which they have committed many." *

Washington, as usual, profited by the inactivity of Howe; quietly retreating through Derby (on the 12th) across the Schuylkill to Germantown, within a short distance of Phila-

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* Memoirs, Tom. i., p. 26.

delphia, where he gave his troops a day's repose. Finding them in good spirits, and in nowise disheartened by the recent affair, which they seemed to consider a check rather than a defeat, he resolved to seek the enemy again and give him battle. As preliminary measures, he left some of the Pennsylvania militia in Philadelphia to guard the city; others, under General Armstrong, were posted at the various passes of the Schuylkill, with orders to throw up works; the floating bridge on the lower road was to be unmoored, and the boats collected and taken across the river.

Having taken these precautions against any hostile movement by the lower road, Washington recrossed the Schuylkill, on the 14th, and advanced along the Lancaster road, with the intention of turning the left flank of the enemy. Howe, apprised of his intention, made a similar disposition to outflank him. The two armies came in sight of each other near the Warren Tavern, twenty-three miles from Philadelphia, and were on the point of engaging, but were prevented by a violent storm of rain which lasted for four and twenty hours.

This inclement weather was particularly distressing to the Americans; who were scantily clothed, most of them destitute of blankets, and separated from their tents and baggage. The rain penetrated their cartridge-boxes and the ill-fitted locks of their muskets, rendering the latter useless, being deficient in bayonets. In this plight Washington gave up for the present all thought of attacking the enemy, as their discipline in the use of the bayonet, with which they were universally furnished, would give them a great superiority in action. "The hot-headed politicians," writes one of his officers, "will no doubt censure this part of his conduct, while the more judicious will approve it, as not only

expedient, but, in such a case, highly commendable. It was, without doubt, chagrining to a person of his fine feelings to retreat before an enemy not more in number than himself; yet, with a true greatness of spirit, he sacrificed them to the good of his country." * There was evidently a growing disposition again to criticise Washington's movements, yet how well did this officer judge of him.

The only aim at present was to get to some dry and secure place, where the army might repose and refit. All day, and for a great part of the night, they marched under a cold and pelting rain, and through deep and miry roads, to the Yellow Springs, thence to Warwick, on French Creek; a weary march in stormy weather for troops destitute of every comfort, and nearly a thousand of them actually barefooted. At Warwick furnace, ammunition and a few muskets were obtained, to aid in disputing the passage of the Schuylkill, and the advance of the enemy on Philadelphia.

From French Creek, Wayne was detached with his division to get in the rear of the enemy, form a junction with General Smallwood and the Maryland militia, and, keeping themselves concealed, watch for an opportunity to cut off Howe's baggage and hospital train; in the meantime, Washington crossed the Schuylkill at Parker's Ford, and took a position to defend that pass of the river.

Wayne set off in the night, and, by a circuitous march, got within three miles of the left wing of the British encamped at Trydraffin, and concealing himself in a wood, waited the arrival of Smallwood and his militia. At daybreak he reconnoitered the camp, where Howe, checked by the severity of the weather, had contented himself with

* Memoir of Major Samuel Shaw, by Hon. Josiah Quincy.

uniting his columns and remained under shelter. All day Wayne hovered about the camp; there were no signs of marching; all kept quiet, but lay too compact to be attacked with prudence. He sent repeated messages to Washington, describing the situation of the enemy, and urging him to come on and attack them in their camp. "Their supineness," said he in one of his notes, "answers every purpose of giving you time to get up. If they attempt to move, I shall attack them at all events. . . . There never was, nor never will be, a finer opportunity of giving the enemy a fatal blow than at present. For God's sake push on as fast as possible."

Again, at a later hour, he writes: "The enemy are very quiet, washing and cooking. I expect General Maxwell on the left flank every moment, and, as I lay on the right, we only want you in the rear to complete Mr. Howe's business. I believe he knows nothing of my situation, as I have taken every precaution to prevent any intelligence getting to him, at the same time keeping a watchful eye on his front, flanks and rear."

His motions, however, had not been so secret as he imagined. He was in a part of the country full of the disaffected, and Sir William had received accurate information of his force and where he was encamped. General Gray, with a strong detachment, was sent to surprise him at night in his lair. Late in the evening, when Wayne had set his pickets and sentinels and thrown out his patrols, a countryman brought him word of the meditated attack. He doubted the intelligence, but strengthened his pickets and patrols, and ordered his troops to sleep upon their arms.

At eleven o'clock the pickets were driven in at the point of the bayonet—the enemy were advancing in column,

Wayne instantly took post on the right of his position, to cover the retreat of the left, led by Colonel Hampton, the second in command. The latter was tardy, and incautiously paraded his troops in front of their fires, so as to be in full relief. The enemy rushed on without firing a gun; all was the silent but deadly work of the bayonet and the cutlass. Nearly three hundred of Hampton's men were killed or wounded, and the rest put to flight. Wayne gave the enemy some well-directed volleys, and then, retreating to a small distance, rallied his troops and prepared for further defense. The British, however, contented themselves with the blow they had given, and retired with very little loss, taking with them between seventy and eighty prisoners, several of them officers, and eight baggage wagons heavily laden.

General Smallwood, who was to have co-operated with Wayne, was within a mile of him at the time of his attack, and would have hastened to his assistance with his well known intrepidity; but he had not the corps under his command with which he had formerly distinguished himself, and his raw militia fled in a panic at the first sight of a return party of the enemy.

Wayne was deeply mortified by the result of this affair, and, finding it severely criticised in the army, demanded a court-martial, which pronounced his conduct everything that was to be expected from an active, brave and vigilant officer; whatever blame there was in the matter fell upon his second in command, who, by delay, or misapprehension of orders, and an unskillful position of his troops, had exposed them to be massacred.

On the 21st, Sir William Howe made a rapid march high up the Schuylkill, on the road leading to Reading, as if he intended either to capture the military stores deposited there

or to turn the right of the American army. Washington kept pace with him on the opposite side of the river, up to Pott's Grove, about thirty miles from Philadelphia.

The movement on the part of Howe was a mere feint. No sooner had he drawn Washington so far up the river than, by a rapid countermarch on the night of the 22d, he got to the ford below, threw his troops across on the next morning and pushed forward for Philadelphia. By the time Washington was apprised of this counter-movement, Howe was too far on his way to be overtaken by harassed, barefooted troops, worn out by constant marching. Feeling the necessity of immediate re-enforcements, he wrote on the same day to Putnam at Peekskill: "The situation of our affairs in this quarter calls for every aid and for every effort. I therefore desire that, without a moment's loss of time, you will detach as many effective rank and file, under proper generals and officers, as will make the whole number, including those with General McDougall, amount to twenty-five hundred privates and non-commissioned fit for duty.

"I must urge you, by every motive, to send this detachment without the least possible delay. No considerations are to prevent it. It is our first object to defeat, if possible, the army now opposed to us here."

On the next day (24th) he wrote also to General Gates. "This army has not been able to oppose General Howe's with the success that was wished, and needs a re-enforcement. I therefore request, if you have been so fortunate as to oblige General Burgoyne to retreat to Ticonderoga, or if you have not, and circumstances will admit, that you will order Colonel Morgan to join me again with his corps. I sent him up when I thought you materially wanted him;

and, if his services can be dispensed with now, you will direct his immediate return."

Having called a council of officers and taken their opinions, which concurred with his own, Washington determined to remain some days at Pott's Grove, to give repose to his troops and await the arrival of re-enforcements.

Sir William Howe halted at Germantown, within a short distance of Philadelphia, and encamped the main body of his army in and about that village; detaching Lord Cornwallis with a large force and a number of officers of distinction to take formal possession of the city. That general marched into Philadelphia on the 26th, with a brilliant staff and escort, and followed by splendid legions of British and Hessian grenadiers, long trains of artillery, and squadrons of light dragoons, the finest troops in the army all in their best array; stepping to the swelling music of the band playing "God Save the King," and presenting with their scarlet uniforms, their glittering arms and flaunting feathers, a striking contrast to the poor patriot troops who had recently passed through the same streets, weary and way-worn, and happy if they could cover their raggedness with a brown linen hunting-frock, and decorate their caps with a sprig of evergreen.

In this way the British took possession of the city, so long the object of their awkward attempts, and regarded by them as a triumphant acquisition; having been the seat of the general government; the capital of the confederacy. Washington maintained his characteristic equanimity. "This is an event," writes he to Governor Trumbull, "which we have reason to wish had not happened, and which will be attended with several ill consequences; but I hope it will not be so detrimental as many apprehend, and that a little time and

perseverance will give us some favorable opportunity of recovering our loss, and of putting our affairs in a more flourishing condition."

He had heard of the prosperous situation of affairs in the Northern department and the repeated checks given to the enemy. "I flatter myself," writes he, "we shall soon hear that they have been succeeded by other fortunate and interesting events, as the two armies, by General Gates's letter, were encamped near each other."

We will now revert to the course of the campaign in that quarter, the success of which he trusted would have a beneficial influence on the operations in which he was personally engaged. Indeed, the operations in the Northern department formed, as we have shown, but a part of his general scheme, and were constantly present to his thoughts. His generals had each his own individual enterprise, or his own department to think about; Washington had to think for the whole.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Dubious Position of Burgoyne—Collects his Forces—Ladies of Distinction in his Camp—Lady Harriet Ackland—The Baroness de Riedesel—American Army Re-enforced—Silent Movements of Burgoyne—Watched from the Summit of the Hills—His March along the Hudson—Position of the two Camps—Battle on the 19th Sept.—Burgoyne encamps nearer—Fortifies his Camp—Promised Co-operation by Sir Henry Clinton—Determines to await it—Quarrel between Gates and Arnold—Arnold deprived of Command—Burgoyne waits for Co-operation

THE checks which Burgoyne had received on right and left, and, in a great measure, through the spontaneous rising of the country, had opened his eyes to the difficulties of his situation, and the errors as to public feeling into which he

had been led by his tory counselors. "The great bulk of the country is undoubtedly with the Congress in principle and zeal," writes he, "and their measures are executed with a secrecy and dispatch that are not to be equaled. Wherever the king's forces point, militia, to the amount of three or four thousand, assemble in twenty-four hours. *They bring with them their subsistence, etc., and, the alarm over, they return to their farms.* The Hampshire Grants, in particular, a country unpeopled and almost unknown last war, now abounds in the most active and most rebellious race of the continent, and hangs like a gathering storm upon my left." What a picture this gives of a patriotic and war-like yeomanry. He complains, too, that no operation had yet been undertaken in his favor; the Highlands of the Hudson had not even been threatened; the consequence was that two brigades had been detached from them to strengthen the army of Gates, strongly posted near the mouth of the Mohawk River, with a superior force of Continental troops, and as many militia as he pleased.

Burgoyne declared that, had he any latitude in his orders, he would remain where he was, or perhaps fall back to Fort Edward, where his communication with Lake George would be secure, and wait for some event that might assist his movement forward; his orders, however, were positive to force a junction with Sir William Howe. He did not feel at liberty, therefore, to remain inactive longer than would be necessary to receive the re-enforcements of the additional companies, the German drafts and recruits actually on Lake Champlain, and to collect provisions enough for twenty-five days. These re-enforcements were indispensable, because, from the hour he should pass the Hudson River and proceed toward Albany, all safety of communication would cease.

"I yet do not despair," adds he, manfully. "Should I succeed in forcing my way to Albany, and find that country in a state to subsist my army, I shall think no more of a retreat, but, at the worst, fortify there, and await Sir William's operations." *

A feature of peculiar interest is given to this wild and rugged expedition by the presence of two ladies of rank and refinement involved in its perils and hardships. One was Lady Harriet Ackland, daughter of the Earl of Ilchester, and wife of Major Ackland of the grenadiers; the other was the Baroness de Riedesel, wife of the Hessian major-general. Both of these ladies had been left behind in Canada. Lady Harriet, however, on hearing that her husband was wounded in the affair at Hubbardton, instantly set out to rejoin him, regardless of danger, and of her being in a condition before long to become a mother.

Crossing the whole length of Lake Champlain, she found him in a sick bed at Skenesborough. After his recovery, she refused to leave him, but had continued with the army ever since. Her example had been imitated by the Baroness de Riedesel, who had joined the army at Fort Edward, bringing with her her three small children. The friendship and sympathy of these two ladies in all scenes of trial and suffering, and their devoted attachment to their husbands, afford touching episodes in the story of the campaign. When the army was on the march, they followed a little distance in the rear, Lady Harriet in a two-wheeled tumbrel, the baroness in a calash, capable of holding herself, her children, and two servants. The latter has left a journal of her campaigning, which we may occasionally cite. "They moved," she

* Letter to Lord George Germaine.

says, "in the midst of soldiery, who were full of animation, singing camp songs, and panting for action. They had to travel through almost impassable woods; in a picturesque and beautiful region; but which was almost abandoned by its inhabitants, who had hastened to join the American army." "They added much to its strength," observes she, "as they were all good marksmen, and the love of their country inspired them with more than ordinary courage." *

The American army had received various re-enforcements. The most efficient was Morgan's corps of riflemen, sent by Washington. He had also furnished it with artillery. It was now about ten thousand strong. Schuyler, finding himself and his proffered services slighted by Gates, had returned to Albany. His patriotism was superior to personal resentments. He still continued to promote the success of the campaign, exerting his influence over the Indian tribes to win them from the enemy. At Albany he held talks and war-feasts with deputations of Oneida, Tuscarora, and Onondaga warriors, and procured scouting parties of them, which he sent to the camp, and which proved of great service. His former aid-de-camp, Colonel Brockholst Livingston, and his secretary, Colonel Varick, remained in camp, and kept him informed by letter of passing occurrences. They were much about the person of General Arnold, who, since his return from relieving Fort Stanwix, commanded the left wing of the army. Livingston, in fact, was with him as aid-de-camp. The jealousy of Gates was awakened by these circumstances. He knew their attachment to Schuyler, and suspected they were prejudicing the mind of Arnold against him; and this suspicion may have been the origin of a

* Riedesel's Memoirs.

coolness and neglect which he soon evinced toward Arnold himself. These young officers, however, though devotedly attached to Schuyler from a knowledge of his generous character, were above any camp intrigue. Livingston was again looking forward with youthful ardor to a brush with the enemy, but regretted that his former chief would not be there to lead it. "Burgoyne," writes he to Schuyler exultingly, "is in such a situation that he can neither advance nor retire without fighting. A capital battle must soon be fought. I am chagrined to the soul when I think that another person will reap the fruits of your labors." *

Colonel Varick, equally eager, was afraid Burgoyne might be decamping. "His evening guns," writes he, "are seldom heard, and, when heard, are very low in sound." †

The dense forests, in fact, which covered the country between the hostile armies, concealed their movements, and as Gates threw out no harassing parties, his information concerning the enemy was vague. Burgoyne, however, was diligently collecting all his forces from Skenesborough, Fort Anne, and Fort George, and collecting provisions; he had completed a bridge by which he intended to pass the Hudson, and force his way to Albany, where he expected co-operation from below. Everything was conducted with as much silence and caution as possible. His troops paraded without beat of drum and evening guns were discontinued. So stood matters on the 11th of September, when a report was circulated in the American camp that Burgoyne was in motion, and that he had made a speech to his soldiers, telling them that the fleet had returned to Canada, and their only safety was to fight their way to New York.

* MS. Letter to Schuyler. † Ibid.

As General Gates was to *receive* an attack, it was thought he ought to choose the ground where to receive it; Arnold, therefore, in company with Kosciuszko, the Polish engineer, reconnoitered the neighborhood in quest of a good camping-ground, and at length fixed upon a ridge of hills called Bemis's Heights, which Kosciuszko proceeded to fortify.

In the meantime, Colonel Colburn was sent off with a small party to ascend the high hills on the east side of the Hudson, and watch the movements of the enemy with glasses from their summits, or from the tops of the trees. For three days he kept thus on the lookout, sending word from time to time to camp of all that he espied.

On the 11th there were the first signs of movement among Burgoyne's troops. On the 13th and 14th, they slowly passed over a bridge of boats, which they had thrown across the Hudson, and encamped near Fish Creek. Colburn counted eight hundred tents, including marquees. A mile in advance were fourteen more tents. The Hessians remained encamped on the eastern side of the river, but intervening woods concealed the number of their tents. There was not the usual stir of military animation in the camps. There were no evening nor morning guns.

On the 15th, both English and Hessian camps struck their tents and loaded their baggage wagons. By twelve o'clock both began to march. Colburn neglected to notice the route taken by the Hessians; his attention was absorbed by the British, who made their way slowly and laboriously down the western side of the river, along a wretched road intersected by brooks and rivulets, the bridges over which Schuyler had broken down. The division had with it eighty-five baggage wagons and a great train of artillery,

with two unwieldy twenty-four pounders acting like drag-anchors. It was a silent, dogged march, without beat of drum, or spirit-stirring bray of trumpet. A body of light troops, new levies, and Indians, painted and decorated for war, struck off from the rest and disappeared in the forest, up Fish Creek. From the great silence observed by Burgoyne in his movements, and the care he took in keeping his men together, and allowing no straggling parties, Colonel Colburn apprehended that he meditated an attack. Having seen the army advance two miles on its march, therefore, he descended from the heights and hastened to the American camp to make his report. A British prisoner, brought in soon afterward, stated that Burgoyne had come to a halt about four miles distant.

On the following morning, the army was under arms at daylight; the enemy, however, remained encamped, repairing bridges in front, and sending down guard boats to reconnoiter; the Americans, therefore, went on to fortify their position. The ridge of hills called Bemis's Heights rises abruptly from the narrow flat bordering the west side of the river. Kosciuszko had fortified the camp with intrenchments three-quarters of a mile in extent, having redoubts and batteries, which commanded the valley, and even the hills on the opposite side of the river; for the Hudson, in this upper part, is comparatively a narrow stream. From the foot of the height an intrenchment extended to the river, ending with a battery at the water edge, commanding a floating bridge.

The right wing of the army, under the immediate command of Gates, and composed of Glover's, Nixon's, and Patterson's brigades, occupied the brow of the hill nearest to the river, with the flats below.

The left wing, commanded by Arnold, was on the side of the camp furthest from the river, and distant from the latter about three-quarters of a mile. It was composed of the New Hampshire brigade of General Poor, Pierre Van Courtlandt's and James Livingston's regiments of New York militia, the Connecticut militia, Morgan's riflemen, and Dearborn's infantry. The center was composed of Massachusetts and New York troops.

Burgoyne gradually drew nearer to the camp, throwing out large parties of pioneers and workmen. The Americans disputed every step. A Hessian officer observes: "The enemy bristled up his hair, as we attempted to repair more bridges. At last we had to do him the honor of sending out whole regiments to protect our workmen." *

It was Arnold who provoked this honor. At the head of fifteen hundred men he skirmished bravely with the superior force sent out against him, and retired with several prisoners.

Burgoyne now encamped about two miles from General Gates, disposing his army in two lines; the left on the river, the right extending at right angles to it, about six hundred yards, across the low grounds to a range of steep and rocky hills, occupied by the *élite;* a ravine formed by a rivulet from the hills passed in front of the camp. The low ground between the armies was cultivated; the hills were covered with woods, excepting three or four small openings and deserted farms. Besides the ravines which fronted each camp there was a third one, midway between them, also at right angles to the river.†

On the morning of the 19th, General Gates received in-

* Schlözer's Briefwechsel.
† Wilkinson's Memoris, i. 236.

telligence that the enemy were advancing in great force on his left. It was, in fact, their right wing, composed of the British line and led by Burgoyne in person. It was covered by the grenadiers and light infantry under General Fraser and Colonel Breyman, who kept along the high grounds on the right; while they, in turn, were covered in front and on the flanks by Indians, provincial royalists, and Canadians. The left wing and artillery were advancing at the same time, under Major-generals Phillips and Riedesel, along the great road and meadows by the river side, but they were retarded by the necessity of repairing broken bridges. It was the plan of Burgoyne that the Canadians and Indians should attack the central outposts of the Americans, and draw their attention in that direction, while he and Fraser, making a circuit through the woods, should join forces and fall upon the rear of the American camp. As the dense forests hid them from each other, signal guns were to regulate their movements. Three, fired in succession, were to denote that all was ready, and be the signal for an attack in front, flank and rear.

The American pickets, stationed along the ravine of Mill Creek, sent repeated accounts to General Gates of the movements of the enemy; but he remained quiet in his camp, as if determined to await an attack. The American officers grew impatient. Arnold especially, impetuous by nature, urged repeatedly that a detachment should be sent forth to check the enemy in their advance, and drive the Indians out of the woods. At length he succeeded in getting permission, about noon, to detach Morgan with his riflemen and Dearborn with his infantry from his division. They soon fell in with the Canadians and Indians, which formed the advance guard of the enemy's right, and attacking them

with spirit, drove them in, or rather dispersed them. Morgan's riflemen, following up their advantage with too much eagerness, became likewise scattered, and a strong re-enforcement of royalists arriving on the scene of action, the Americans, in their turn, were obliged to give way.

Other detachments now arrived from the American camp, led by Arnold, who attacked Fraser on his right, to check his attempt to get in the rear of the camp. Finding the position of Fraser too strong to be forced, he sent to headquarters for re-enforcements, but they were refused by Gates, who declared that no more should go; "he would not suffer his camp to be exposed."* The reason he gave was that it might be attacked by the enemy's left wing.

Arnold now made a rapid counter-march, and, his movement being masked by the woods, suddenly attempted to turn Fraser's left. Here he came in full conflict with the British line, and threw himself upon it with a boldness and impetuosity that for a time threatened to break it and cut the wings of the army asunder. The grenadiers and Breyman's riflemen hastened to its support. General Phillips broke his way through the woods with four pieces of artillery, and Riedesel came on with his heavy dragoons. Re-enforcements came likewise to Arnold's assistance; his force, however, never exceeded three thousand men, and with these, for nearly four hours, he kept up a conflict almost hand to hand, with the whole right wing of the British army. Part of the time the Americans had the advantage of fighting under the cover of a wood, so favorable to their militia and sharpshooters. Burgoyne ordered the woods to be cleared by the bayonet. His troops rushed forward in columns with

* Colonel Varick to Schuyler. Schuyler Papers.

a hurra! The Americans kept within their intrenchments and repeatedly repulsed them; but, if they pursued their advantage, and advanced into open field, they were in their turn driven back.

Night alone put an end to a conflict which the British acknowledged to have been the most obstinate and hardly fought they had ever experienced in America. Both parties claimed the victory. But, though the British remained on the field of battle, where they lay all night upon their arms, they had failed in their object; they had been assailed instead of being the assailants; while the American troops had accomplished the purpose for which they had sallied forth; had checked the advance of the enemy, frustrated their plan of attack, and returned exulting to their camp. Their loss in killed and wounded was between three and four hundred, including several officers; that of the enemy upward of five hundred.

Burgoyne gives an affecting picture of the situation of the ladies of rank, already mentioned, during the action. Lady Harriet had been directed by her husband, Major Ackland, to follow the route of the artillery and baggage, which was not exposed. "At the time the action began," writes Burgoyne, "she found herself near a small uninhabited hut, where she alighted. When it was found the action was becoming general and bloody, the surgeons of the hospital took possession of the same place, as the most convenient for the first care of the wounded. Thus was the lady in hearing of one continued fire of cannon and musketry for four hours together, with the presumption, from the post of her husband at the head of the grenadiers, that he was in the most exposed part of the action. She had three female companions, the Baroness of Riedesel, and the wives of two British

officers, Major Harnage and Lieutenant Reynell; but in the event their presence served but little for comfort. Major Harnage was soon brought to the surgeons very badly wounded; and in a little time after came intelligence that Lieutenant Reynell was shot dead. Imagination wants no helps to figure the state of the whole group."

Arnold was excessively indignant at Gates's withholding the re-enforcements he had required in the heat of the action; had they been furnished, he said, he might have severed the line of the enemy and gained a complete victory. He was urgent to resume the action on the succeeding morning, and follow up the advantage he had gained, but Gates declined, to his additional annoyance. He attributed the refusal to pique or jealousy, but Gates subsequently gave as a reason the great deficiency of powder and ball in the camp, which was known only to himself, and which he kept secret until a supply was sent from Albany.

Burgoyne now strengthened his position with intrenchments and batteries, part of them across the meadows which bordered the river, part on the brow of the heights which commanded them. The Americans likewise extended and strengthened their line of breastworks on the left of the camp; the right was already unassailable. The camps were within gunshot, but with ravines and woods between them.

Washington's predictions of the effect to be produced by Morgan's riflemen approached fulfillment. The Indians, dismayed at the severe treatment experienced from these veteran bushfighters, were disappearing from the British camp. The Canadians and royal provincials, "mere trimmers," as Burgoyne called them, were deserting in great numbers, and he had no confidence in those who remained.

His situation was growing more and more critical. On

the 21st, he heard shouts in the American camp, and in a little while their cannon thundered a *feu de joie*. News had been received from General Lincoln that a detachment of New England troops under Colonel Brown had surprised the carrying-place, mills, and French lines at Ticonderoga, captured an armed sloop, gunboats, and bateaux, made three hundred prisoners, besides releasing one hundred American captives, and were laying siege to Fort Independence.*

Fortunately for Burgoyne, while affairs were darkening in the North, a ray of hope dawned from the South. While the shouts from the American camp were yet ringing in his ears, came a letter in cipher from Sir Henry Clinton, dated the 12th of September, announcing his intention in about ten days to attack the forts in the Highlands of the Hudson.

Burgoyne sent back the messenger the same night, and dispatched, moreover, two officers in disguise by different routes, all bearing messages informing Sir Henry of his perilous situation, and urging a diversion that might oblige General Gates to detach a part of his army; adding that he would endeavor to maintain his present position, and await favorable events until the 12th of October.†

The jealousy of Gates had been intensely excited at finding the whole credit of the late affair given by the army to Arnold. In his dispatches to government he made no mention of him. This increased the schism between them. Wilkinson, the adjutant-general, who was a sycophantic adherent of Gates, pandered to his pique by withdrawing from Arnold's division Morgan's rifle corps and Dearborn's light infantry, its arm of strength which had done such brilliant

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* Colonel Varick to Schuyler. Schuyler Papers.
† Burgoyne to Lord George Germaine.

service in the late affair. They were henceforth to be subject to no order but those from headquarters.

Arnold called on Gates on the evening of the 22d to remonstrate. High words passed between them, and matters came to an open rupture. Gates, in his heat, told Arnold that he did not consider him a major-general, he having sent his resignation to Congress—that he had never given him the command of any division of the army—that General Lincoln would arrive in a day or two, and then he would have no further occasion for him, and would give him a pass to go to Philadelphia, whenever he chose.*

Arnold returned to his quarters in a rage, and wrote a note to Gates, requesting the proffered permit to depart for Philadelphia; by the time he received it his ire had cooled and he had changed his mind. He determined to remain in camp and abide the anticipated battle.

Lincoln, in the meantime, arrived in advance of his troops; which soon followed to the amount of two thousand. Part of the troops, detached by him under Colonel Brown, were besieging Ticonderoga and Fort Independence.

Colonel Brown himself, with part of his detachment, had embarked on Lake George in an armed schooner and a squadron of captured gunboats and bateaux, and was threatening the enemy's deposit of baggage and heavy artillery at Diamond Island. The toils so skillfully spread were encompassing Burgoyne more and more; the gates of Canada were closing behind him.

A morning or two after Lincoln's arrival, Arnold observed him giving some directions in the left division, and quickly inquired whether he was doing so by order of Gen-

* Col. Livingston to Schuyler. Schuyler Papers.

eral Gates; being answered in the negative, he observed that the left division belonged to him; and that he believed his (Lincoln's) proper station was on the right, and that of General Gates ought to be in the center. He requested him to mention this to General Gates and have the matter adjusted.

"He is determined," writes Varick, "not to suffer any one to interfere in his division, and says it will be death to any officer who does so in action." Arnold, in fact, was in a bellicose vein, and rather blustered about the camp. Gates, he said, could not refuse him his command, and he would not yield it now that a battle was expected.

Some of the general officers and colonels of his division proposed to make him an address, thanking him for his past services, particularly in the late action, and entreating him to stay. Others suggested that the general officers should endeavor to procure a reconciliation between the jarring parties. Lincoln was inclined to do so; but, in the end, neither measure was taken, through fear of offending General Gates. In the meantime Arnold remained in camp, treated, he said, as a cipher, and never consulted; though when Congress had sent him to that department, at the request of General Washington, they expected the commander would at least have taken his opinion on public matters.

On the 30th, he gave vent to his feelings in an indignant letter to Gates. "Notwithstanding I have reason to think your treatment proceeds from a spirit of jealousy," writes he, "and that I have everything to fear from the malice of my enemies, conscious of my own innocency and integrity, I am determined to sacrifice my feelings, present peace, and quiet, to the public good, and continue in the army at this critical juncture, when my country needs every support.

"I hope," concludes he, "you will not impute this hint to

a wish to command the army, or to outshine you, when I assure you it proceeds from my zeal for the cause of my country, in which I expect to rise or fall." *

All this time the Americans were harassing the British camp with frequent night alarms and attacks on its pickets and outposts.

"From the 20th of September to the 7th of October," writes Burgoyne, "the armies were so near that not a night passed without firing, and sometimes concerted attacks upon our advanced pickets. I do not believe either officer or soldier ever slept in that interval without his clothes; or that any general officer or commander of a regiment passed a single night without being upon his legs occasionally at different hours, and constantly an hour before daylight." †

Still Burgoyne kept up a resolute mien, telling his soldiers, in a harangue, that he was determined to leave his bones on the field, or force his way to Albany. He yet clung to the hope that Sir Henry Clinton might operate in time to relieve him from his perilous position.

We will now cast a look toward New York, and ascertain the cause of Sir Henry's delay in his anxiously expected operations on the Hudson.

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* Gates's Papers, N. Y. Hist. Lib.
† Burgoyne's Expedition, p. 166.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Preparations of Sir Henry Clinton—State of the Highland Defenses—Putnam Alarmed—Advance of the Armament up the Hudson—Plan of Sir Henry Clinton—Peekskill threatened—Putnam deceived—Secret March of the Enemy through the Mountains—Forts Montgomery and Clinton overpowered—Narrow Escape of the Commanders—Conflagration and Explosion of the American Frigates—Rallying Efforts of Putnam and Governor Clinton—The Spy and the Silver Bullet—Esopus burned—Ravaging Progress of the Enemy up the Hudson

THE expedition of Sir Henry Clinton had awaited the arrival of re-enforcements from Europe, which were slowly crossing the ocean in Dutch bottoms. At length they arrived, after a three months' voyage, and now there was a stir of warlike preparation at New York; the streets were full of soldiery, the bay full of ships; and water craft of all kinds were plying about the harbor. Between three and four thousand men were to be embarked on board of ships of war, armed galleys, and flat-bottomed boats. A southern destination was given out, but shrewd observers surmised the real one.

The defenses of the Highlands, on which the security of the Hudson depended, were at this time weakly garrisoned; some of the troops having been sent off to re-enforce the armies on the Delaware and in the North. Putnam, who had the general command of the Highlands, had but eleven hundred Continental and four hundred militia troops with him at Peekskill, his headquarters. There was a feeble

garrison at Fort Independence in the vicinity of Peekskill, to guard the public stores and work-shops at Continental Village.

The Highland forts, Clinton, Montgomery and Constitution, situated among the mountains and forming their main defense, were no better garrisoned, and George Clinton, who had the command of them, and who was in a manner the champion of the Highlands, was absent from his post attending the State Legislature at Kingston (Esopus), in Ulster County, in his capacity of governor.

There were patriot eyes in New York to watch the course of events, and patriot boats on the river to act as swift messengers. On the 29th of September Putnam writes to his coadjutor the governor: "I have received intelligence on which I can fully depend that the enemy had received a reenforcement at New York, last Thursday, of about three thousand British and foreign troops; that General Clinton has called in guides who belong about Croton River; has ordered hard bread to be baked; that the troops are called from Paulus Hook to King's Bridge, and the whole troops are now under marching orders. I think it highly probable the designs of the enemy are against the posts of the Highlands, or of some part of the counties of Westchester or Dutchess." Under these circumstances he begged a re-enforcement of the militia to enable him to maintain his post, and intimated a wish for the personal assistance and counsel of the governor. In a postscript he adds: "The ships are drawn up in the river, and I believe nothing prevents them from paying us an immediate visit but a contrary wind."

On receiving this letter the governor forthwith hastened to his post in the Highlands with such militia force as he could collect. We have heretofore spoken of his Highland

citadel, Fort Montgomery, and of the obstructions of chain, boom, and chevaux de-frise between it and the opposite promontory of Anthony's Nose, with which it had been hoped to barricade the Hudson. The chain had repeatedly given way under the pressure of the tide, but the obstructions were still considered efficient, and were protected by the guns of the fort, and of two frigates and two armed galleys anchored above.

Fort Clinton had subsequently been erected within rifle-shot of Fort Montgomery, to occupy ground which commanded it. A deep ravine and stream called Peploep's Kill intervened between the two forts, across which there was a bridge. The governor had his headquarters in Fort Montgomery, which was the northern and largest fort, but its works were unfinished. His brother James had charge of Fort Clinton, which was complete. The whole force to garrison the associate forts did not exceed six hundred men, chiefly militia, but they had the veteran Colonel Lamb of the artillery with them, who had served in Canada, and a company of his artillerists was distributed in the two forts.

The armament of Sir Henry Clinton, which had been waiting for a wind, set sail in the course of a day or two and stood up the Hudson, dogged by American swift-rowing whaleboats. Late at night of the 4th of October came a barge across the river from Peekskill to Fort Montgomery, bearing a letter from Putnam to the governor. "This morning," writes he, "we had information from our guard boats that there were two ships of war, three tenders and a large number of flat-bottomed boats coming up the river. They proceeded up as far as Tarrytown, where they landed their men. This evening they were followed by one large man-of-war, five topsail vessels, and a large number of small

craft. I have sent off parties to examine their route and harass their march, if prudent. By information from several different quarters, we have reason to believe they intend for this post. They are now making up, as we hear, for the Croton Bridge." *

The landing of troops at Tarrytown was a mere feint on the part of Sir Henry to distract the attention of the Americans; after marching a few miles into the country they returned and re-embarked; the armament continued across the Tappan Sea and Haverstraw Bay to Verplanck's Point, where, on the 5th, Sir Henry landed with three thousand men about eight miles below Peekskill.

Putnam drew back to the hills in the rear of the village to prepare for the expected attack, and sent off to Governor Clinton for all the troops he could spare. So far the maneuvers of Sir Henry Clinton had been successful. It was his plan to threaten an attack on Peekskill and Fort Independence, and, when he had drawn the attention of the American commanders to that quarter, to land troops on the western shore of the Hudson, below the Dunderberg (Thunder Hill), make a rapid march through the defiles behind that mountain to the rear of Forts Montgomery and Clinton, come down on them by surprise, and carry them by a *coup de main*.

Accordingly at an early hour of the following morning, taking advantage of a thick fog, he crossed with two thousand men to Stony Point, on the west shore of the river, leaving about a thousand men, chiefly royalists, at Verplanck's Point, to keep up a threatening aspect toward Peekskill. Three frigates, also, were to stand up what is

* Correspondence of the Revolution. Sparks, ii. 537.

called the Devil's Horse Race into Peekskill Bay, and station themselves within cannon-shot of Fort Independence.

The crossing of the troops had been dimly descried from Peekskill, but they were supposed to be a mere detachment from the main body on a maraud.

Having accomplished his landing, Sir Henry, conducted by a tory guide, set out on a forced and circuitous march of several miles by rugged defiles round the western base of the Dunderberg. At the entrance of the pass he left a small force to guard it, and keep up his communication with the ships. By eight o'clock in the morning he had effected his march round the Dunderberg, and halted on the northern side in a ravine, between it and a conical mount called Bear Hill. The possibility of an enemy's approach by this pass had been noticed by Washington in reconnoitering the Highlands, and he had mentioned it in his instructions to Generals Greene and Knox, when they were sent to make their military survey, but they considered it impracticable, from the extreme difficulty of the mountain passes. It is in defiance of difficulties, however, that surprises are apt to be attempted, and the most signal have been achieved in the face of seeming impossibilities.

In the ravine between the Dunderberg and Bear Hill Sir Henry divided his forces. One division, nine hundred strong, led by Lieutenant-colonel Campbell, was to make a circuit through the forest round the western side of Bear Hill, so as to gain the rear of Fort Montgomery. After Sir Henry had allowed sufficient time for them to make the circuit, he was to proceed with the other division down the ravine, toward the river, turn to the left along a narrow strip of land between the Hudson and a small lake called Sinipink Pond, which lay at the foot of Bear Hill, and advance upon

Fort Clinton. Both forts were to be attacked at the same time.

The detachment under Campbell set off in high spirits; it was composed partly of royalists, led by Colonel Beverely Robinson of New York, partly of Emerick's chasseurs, and partly of grenadiers, under Lord Rawdon, then about twenty-four years of age, who had already seen service at Bunker's Hill. With him went Count Gabrouski, a Polish nobleman, aid-de-camp to Sir Henry Clinton, but who had sought to accompany his friend, Lord Rawdon, in this wild mountain scramble. Everything thus far had been conducted with celerity and apparent secrecy, and complete surprise of both forts was anticipated. Sir Henry had, indeed, outwitted one of the guardians of the Highlands, but the other was aware of his designs. Governor Clinton, on receiving intelligence of ships of war coming up the Hudson, had sent scouts beyond the Dunderberg to watch their movements. Early on the present morning, word had been brought him that forty boats were landing a large force at Stony Point. He now, in his turn, apprehended an attack, and sent to Putnam for re-enforcements, preparing, in the meantime, to make such defense as his scanty means afforded.

A lieutenant was sent out with thirty men from Fort Clinton, to proceed along the river-road and reconnoiter. He fell in with the advance guard of Sir Henry Clinton's division, and retreated skirmishing to the fort. A larger detachment was sent out to check the approach of the enemy on this side; while sixty men, afterward increased to a hundred, took post with a brass field-piece in the Bear Hill defile.

It was a narrow and rugged pass, bordered by shagged forests. As Campbell and his division came pressing for-

ward they were checked by the discharge of firearms and of the brass field-piece, which swept the steep defile. The British troops then filed off on each side into the woods, to surround the Americans. The latter, finding it impossible to extricate their field-piece in the rugged pass, spiked it and retreated into the fort under cover of the fire of a twelve-pounder, with which Lamb had posted himself on the crest of a hill.

Sir Henry Clinton had met with equally obstinate opposition in his approach to Fort Clinton; the narrow strip of land between Lake Sinipink and the Hudson, along which he advanced, being fortified by an abatis. By four o'clock, the Americans were driven within their works, and both forts were assailed. The defense was desperate; for Governor Clinton was a hard fighter, and he was still in hopes of reenforcements from Putnam; not knowing that the messenger he sent to him had turned traitor and deserted to the enemy.

About five o'clock he was summoned to surrender in five minutes, to prevent the effusion of blood. The reply was a refusal. About ten minutes afterward there was a general attack upon both forts. It was resisted with obstinate spirit. The action continued until dusk. The ships under Commodore Hotham approached near enough to open an irregular fire upon the forts, and upon the vessels anchored above the chevaux-de-frise. The latter returned the fire, and the flash and roar of their cannonry in the gathering darkness and among the echoes of the mountains increased the terrors of the strife. The works, however, were too extensive to be manned by the scanty garrisons; they were entered by different places and carried at the point of the bayonet; the Americans fought desperately from one redoubt to another;

some were slain, some taken prisoners, and some escaped under cover of the night to the river or the mountains. "The garrison," writes Clinton, significantly, "had to fight their way out as many as could, as we determined not to surrender."

His brother James was saved from a deadly thrust of a bayonet by a garrison orderly-book in his pocket, but he received a flesh wound in the thigh. He slid down a precipice, one hundred feet high, into the ravine, between the forts and escaped to the woods. The governor leaped down the rocks to the river side, where a boat was putting off with a number of the fugitives. They turned back to receive him, but he generously refused to endanger their safety, as the boat was already loaded to the gunwale. It was only on receiving assurance of its being capable of bearing his additional weight that he consented to enter. The boat crossed the Hudson in safety, and before midnight the governor was with Putnam, at Continental Village, concerting further measures.

Putnam had been completely outmaneuvered by Sir Henry Clinton. He had continued until late in the morning, in the belief that Peekskill and Fort Independence were to be the objects of attack. His pickets and scouts could not ascertain the number of the enemy remaining on the east side of the river; a large fire near Stony Point made him think the troops which had crossed were merely burning storehouses; while ships, galleys, and flat-bottomed boats seemed preparing to land forces at Fort Independence and Peekskill. In the course of the morning he sallied forth with Brigadier-general Parsons, to reconnoiter the ground near the enemy. After their return they were alarmed, he says, by "a very heavy and hot firing, both of small arms and

cannon, at Fort Montgomery," which must have made a tremendous uproar among the echoes of the Dunderberg. Aware of the real point of danger, he immediately detached five hundred men to re-enforce the garrison. They had six miles to march along the eastern shore, and then to cross the river; before they could do so the fate of the forts was decided.

British historians acknowledge that the valor and resolution displayed by the Americans in the defense of these forts were in no instance exceeded during the war; their loss in killed, wounded, and missing was stated at two hundred and fifty, a large proportion of the number engaged. Their gallant defense awakened no generous sentiment in the victors. "As the soldiers," observes the British writer, "were much irritated, as well by the fatigue they had undergone and the opposition they met, as by the loss of some brave and favorite officers, the slaughter of the enemy was considerable." *

Among the officers thus deplored, and bloodily revenged, was Colonel Campbell, who commanded the detachment. At his fall the command devolved on Colonel Beverly Robinson of the American loyalists. Another officer slain was Major Grant, of the New York volunteers. Count Gabrouski, the Polish aid-de-camp of Sir Henry Clinton, had gallantly signalized himself by the side of his friend, Lord Rawdon, who led the grenadiers in storming Fort Montgomery. The count received his death wound at the foot of the ramparts. Giving his sword to a grenadier: "Take this sword to Lord Rawdon," said he, "and tell him the owner died like a soldier." †

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* Civil War in America, vol. i., p. 311.
† Stedman, vol. i., p. 364.

On the capture of the forts, the American frigates and galleys stationed for the protection of the chevaux-de-frise slipped their cables, made all sail, and endeavored to escape up the river. The wind, however, proved adverse; there was danger of their falling into the hands of the enemy; the crews, therefore, set them on fire and abandoned them As every sail was set, the vessels, we are told, were soon "magnificent pyramids of fire"; the surrounding mountains were lit up by the glare, and a train of ruddy light gleamed along the river. They were in a part of the Highlands famous for its echoes: as the flames gradually reached the loaded cannon, their thundering reports were multiplied and prolonged along the rocky shores. The vessels at length blew up with tremendous explosions, and all again was darkness.*

On the following morning, the chevaux-de-frise and other obstructions between Fort Montgomery and Anthony's Nose were cleared away: the Americans evacuated Forts Independence and Constitution, and a free passage up the Hudson was open for the British ships. Sir Henry Clinton proceeded no further in person, but left the rest of the enterprise to be accomplished by Sir James Wallace and General Vaughan, with a flying squadron of light frigates, and a considerable detachment of troops.

Putnam had retreated to a pass in the mountains, on the east side of the river near Fishkill, having removed as much of the stores and baggage as possible from the post he had abandoned. The old general was somewhat mortified at having been outwitted by the enemy, but endeavored to shift the responsibility. In a letter to Washington (Oct. 8th), he

* Stedman, vol. i., p. 364.

writes: "I have repeatedly informed your Excellency of the enemy's design against this post; but, from some motive or other, you always differed from me in opinion. As this conjecture of mine has for once proved right, I cannot omit informing you that my real and sincere opinion is, that they now mean to join General Burgoyne with the utmost dispatch. Governor Clinton is exerting himself in collecting the militia of this State. Brigadier-general Parsons I have sent off to forward in the Connecticut militia, which are now arriving in great numbers. I therefore hope and trust, that, in the course of a few days, I shall be able to oppose the progress of the enemy."

He had concerted with Governor Clinton that they should move to the northward with their forces, along the opposite shores of the Hudson, endeavoring to keep pace with the enemy's ships and cover the country from their attacks.

The governor was in the neighborhood of New Windsor, just above the Highlands, where he had posted himself to rally what he termed his "broken but brave troops," and to call out the militia of Ulster and Orange. "I am persuaded," writes he, "if the militia will join me, we can save the country from destruction, and defeat the enemy's design of assisting their Northern army." The militia, however, were not as prompt as usual in answering to the call of their popular and brave-hearted governor. "They are well disposed," writes he, "but anxious about the immediate safety of their respective families (who, for many miles, are yet moving further from the river); they come in the morning and return in the evening, and I never know when I have them, or what my strength is." *

* Letter to the Council of Safety. Jour. of Provincial Congress, vol. i., p. 1064.

On the 9th, two persons coming from Fort Montgomery were arrested by his guards and brought before him for examination. One was much agitated, and was observed to put something hastily into his mouth and swallow it. An emetic was administered and brought up a small silver bullet. Before he could be prevented he swallowed it again. On his refusing a second emetic, the governor threatened to have him hanged and his body opened. The threat produced the bullet in the preceding manner. It was oval in form and hollow, with a screw in the center, and contained a note from Sir Henry Clinton to Burgoyne, written on a slip of thin paper, and dated (Oct. 8th) from Fort Montgomery. "*Nous y voici* (here we are), and nothing between us and Gates. I sincerely hope this little success of ours will facilitate your operations." *

The bearer of the letter was tried and convicted as a spy, and sentenced to be hanged.

The enemy's light-armed vessels were now making their way up the river; landing marauding parties occasionally to make depredations.

As soon as the governor could collect a little force, he pressed forward to protect Kingston (Esopus), the seat of the State Legislature. The enemy in the meantime landed from their ships, routed about one hundred and fifty militia collected to oppose them, marched to the village, set fire to it in every part, consuming great quantities of stores collected there, and then retreated to their ships.

Governor Clinton was two hours too late. He beheld the flames from a distance; and having brought with him the

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* Governor Clinton to the N. Y. Council of Safety. Journal of Prov. Congress.

spy, the bearer of the silver bullet, he hanged him on an apple-tree in sight of the burning village.

Having laid Kingston, the seat of the State government, in ashes, the enemy proceeded in their ravages, destroying the residences of conspicuous patriots at Rhinebeck, Livingston Manor, and elsewhere, and among others the mansion of the widow of the brave General Montgomery: trusting to close their desolating career by a triumphant junction with Burgoyne at Albany.

END OF VOLUME THIRTEEN

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